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Lithuanian Passive-like Impersonals and Regular Passives

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Abstract
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 and the canonical passive with a nominative theme grammatical subject. The -ma/-ta construction is cognate with the Polish and Ukrainian -no/-to construction. The Polish construction is an impersonal active, whereas the Ukrainian construction is a passive with an accusative object (Lavine 2005, 2013; Legate 2014). Although the Lithuanian construction patterns with the Ukrainian one in allowing an auxiliary, it patterns with the Polish in exhibiting a PRO subject and demonstrating that these two properties are dissociable (contra Lavine 2005). To encode the difference between the impersonal and the passive, I argue for the presence of a functional head VoiceP originating above a vP. The impersonal has a PRO subject in VoiceP, while the passive lacks the thematic subject. This study is extended to passives with causative morphology showing that VoiceP and vP are independent of each other: the former introduces external argument and the latter causative semantics (Pylkkänen 2008, Harley 2013, Legate 2014).
Lithuanian Passive-like Impersonals and Regular Passives

Milena Šereikaitė*

1 Introduction

This paper contrasts two Lithuanian constructions: the passive-like -mal/-ta construction with an accusative theme argument (1a) and the canonical passive with a nominative theme argument (1b). I will call (1a) the impersonal and (1b) the non-agreeing passive. Both constructions differ in their behavior despite their identical morphology, a -mal/-ta participle. This study demonstrates that the accusative theme of an impersonal bears properties of a grammatical object of transitive construction, while the nominative theme in a passive behaves like a grammatical subject.

The -mal/-ta construction (1a) is cognate with the Polish (2) and Ukrainian (3) -no/to construction with an accusative theme. The Polish construction is an impersonal active, whereas the Ukrainian construction is a passive with an accusative grammatical object (Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir 2002; Lavine 2005, 2013; Legate 2014, inter alia). Although the Lithuanian construction patterns with the Ukrainian one in allowing an auxiliary, it patterns with the Polish in exhibiting a PRO subject demonstrating that these two properties are dissociable (contra Lavine 2005). To encode the difference between the impersonal and the passive, I argue for the presence of a functional head VoiceP originating above a vP. The impersonal has a PRO subject in VoiceP, while the passive lacks a thematic subject. This study is extended to passives with a causative morphology showing that VoiceP and vP are independent of each other: the former introduces an external argument and the latter causative semantics (Pylkkänen 2008, Harley 2013, Legate 2014).

(1) a. (Yra) rašo-m-a laišką. 
be.PRS.3 write.PPRP-[AGR] letter.ACC
‘One is writing a letter.’

b. Laiškas (yra) rašo-m-a (tėvo). 
Letter.NOM.M.SG be.PRS.3 write.PPRP-[AGR] father.GEN
‘A letter is being written (by the father).’

(2) Znaleo-no niemowlę w koszu. 
found.[AGR] baby.ACC in basket
‘They found a baby in the basket.’

(3) Nemovļja bulo znajde-no u košyku. 
baby.ACC AUX found.[AGR] in basket
‘A baby was found in the basket.’

This paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, I will flesh out the typological framework of Lithuanian passives, which will be crucial for evaluating the differences between the impersonal and the non-agreeing passive. In Section 3, I will compare the impersonals with the passives and introduce the main difference between the two showing that the impersonals, unlike passives, do not involve promotion of a theme argument to a subject position. Section 4 provides analysis for the two constructions and touches upon passives with causative morphology giving evidence for the separation of two functional heads, VoiceP and v-cause. Section 5 concludes.

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1The impersonals like (1a) are translated as active sentences with an indefinite human reading in Geniušienė 2006; Spraunienė, Razanavaiči and Jasionytė 2016 or as passives in Ambrazas et al. 1997:661. Our findings show that the impersonal bears an arbitrary PRO interpretation supporting the former line of work.
2 Basic Facts

In order to compare the impersonals and non-agreeing passives, I will first review the main properties of so-called regular ‘canonical’ passives which received some attention in the literature (Timberlake 1982, Geniušienė 2006, Lavine 2006, Wiemer 2006, Šereikaitė 2012, inter alia). Canonical passives are sentential patterns like (4b). The theme grammatical object becomes a nominative surface subject and agrees with an auxiliary in person and with a passive -m/-t participle in number, gender and case. The auxiliary is optional in the present tense, but obligatory in the past tense. An optional by-phrase introducing agent argument is expressed by a DP with a genitive case. A position where the optional agent phrase typically emerges is either at the end of the clause or between the auxiliary and the participle. Geniušienė (2006) also suggests that it is possible for the genitive DP to occur clause-initially, but then emphasis is placed on the object.

(4) a. Tėvas rašo laišką.
   father.NOM.SG.M write.PRS.3 letter.ACC.SG.M
   ‘The father is writing the letter.’

b. Laiškas (yra) rašo-m-as (tėvo).
   letter.NOM.SG.M be.PRS.3 write.PPRP-NOM.SG.M father.GEN
   ‘The letter is being written (by the father).’
   Agreeing Passive

Ambrazas et al. (1997:661) point out that it is possible to have non-agreeing passive constructions, the focus of this study, as in (5) with a non-agreeing -ma/-ta participle, although these constructions are falling into disuse in Modern Lithuanian. The non-agreeing passive (5) just like the agreeing passive (4b) allows a by-phrase and the theme argument appears in nominative.

(5) Laiškas (yra) rašo-m-a (tėvo).
   letter.NOM.M.SG be.PRS.3 write.PPRP[-AGR] father.GEN
   ‘A letter is being written (by the father).’
   Non-Agreeing Passive

The impersonal constructions also have the neuter -ma/-ta participle,2 but unlike agreeing (4b) and non-agreeing passives (5), their theme argument is accusative and the by-phrase is ungrammatical (6). As mentioned by Geniušienė (2006), the agent in these constructions is interpreted as non-specific, indefinite human. These constructions in the literature are presented without an auxiliary (Geniušienė 2006, Ambrazas et al. 1997). However, Sprauniënė, Razanovaite and Jasionyte’s (2016) study demonstrates that the auxiliary is in fact possible. Indeed, our consultants do not judge the impersonal in (6) as ungrammatical. While the impersonal with an accusative theme is rather rare, those with unergatives (7) and unaccusative (8) verbs are much more productive.

(6) (Yra) rašo-m-a laišką *tėvo.
   be.PRS.3 write.PPRP[-AGR] letter.ACC father.GEN
   ‘One is writing a letter.’
   Impersonal

(7) Jeigu (yra) dirbama legaliai, tada atsiranda gamylibė atgauti mokesčius.
   if be.PRS.3 work.PPRP[-AGR] legally, then appear opportunity receive-INF taxes
   ‘If one works legally, then one also has an opportunity to get back one’s taxes.’
   (www.laae-lssa.lt/node/10)

(8) Džiausiai (yra) miršta-m-a nuo širdies ligų.
   mostly be.PST.3 die.PPRP[-AGR] from heart diseases
   ‘One mostly dies from heart diseases.’
   (http://www.delfi.lt/sveikata/sveikatos-naujenos)

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2 Observe that this construction mostly occurs with -ma participle rather than -ta.
Lastly, it is also important to spell out the main characteristics of the agreeing -m/-t passive participle and its neuter non-agreeing -ma/-ta form. An agreeing passive participle is formed by adjoining agreement morpheme to -m, -t suffix attached to a stem. The -ma/-ta participle is structured by combining the non-agreeing ending -a with the verb and the -ml-t suffix. The participle with the -m suffix is imperfective, often called ‘present participle’, denotes an ongoing action. The participle with the -t suffix is perfective, often termed ‘past participle’, and refers to a state or a completed action.

While the agreeing passive participles are found in passives, the non-agreeing -ma/-ta participles can also be found in evidential constructions like (9) which are often compared to passives. I leave aside these constructions, but an important thing to keep in mind is that evidentials with the -ma/-ta participle as in (9) are not passives. They contain a genitive DP, a quirky subject, which is followed by the neuter participle and a nominative theme argument. The genitive subject in (9) always occupies a clause-initial position and is obligatory, unlike the genitive by-phrase, which is optional and not restricted to a sentence-initial position.³

(9) Ingos nuramin-t-a vaikas.  
Inga.GEN calm.down.PPRP-[AGR] child.NOM  
‘Inga must have calmed the child down.’ (Ambrazas et al. 1997:207)

3 Impersonals vs. Passives

This section demonstrates that despite the apparent morphological similarity the impersonal and the non-agreeing passive exhibit divergent properties.⁴ I show that the impersonal construction lacks characteristics of passives and its theme argument patterns like a grammatical object of an active construction. In other words, the Lithuanian impersonal is not an instance of an ‘exotic’ passive, e.g., a grammatical object passive attested in Ukrainian (Lavine 2005), which violates Burzio’s generalization stating that only a verb that assigns theta-role to the subject can assign the accusative case (Burzio 1986:178). Rather, the impersonal construction is an instance of an active transitive construction with an arbitrary PRO subject.

The first piece of evidence for treating the theme object of the impersonal as an active object comes from negation. In general, when a clause is negated⁵ like (10), the accusative object becomes genitive. The theme argument of impersonals also takes the genitive and the accusative case is ungrammatical (11). In contrast, the surface subject of non-agreeing passives is not overwritten by the genitive under the negation (12) and instead it remains nominative, just like a grammatical subject of a transitive clause.

⁵The genitive of negation test is used as an unaccusativity test in Russian since, in negated sentences, the underlying object of unaccusative takes the genitive, while the underlying subject of unergative does not (Pesetsky 1982). Observe that this is not the case in Lithuanian. Neither the surface subject of passives (14), nor that of unaccusatives (i-a) or unergatives (i-b) licenses the genitive case. The negation affects only the grammatical object of transitive that bears a structural accusative case.

(i) a. Jonas/*Joną ne-dirba naujoje įmonėje.  
Jonas.NOM/Jonas.GEN NEG-work.PRS.3 new company.  
‘Jonas is not working at the new company.’

b. Traukinys/*Traukinio ne-atvažuoja.  
train.NOM/*train.GEN NEG-arrive.PRS.3  
‘The train is not arriving.’
The second piece of evidence is agreement. The theme argument of impersonals (13) does not show agreement on the lexical verb, which is a typical property of a grammatical object of transitives. However, the theme argument of passives can trigger agreement (14).

(13) (Yra) rašo-m-a/*rašo-m-as/*rašo-m-q laišką. 
be.PRS.3 write.PPRP[-AGR]/PPRP-NOM.SG.M/PPRP-ACC.SG.M letter.ACC
‘One is writing a letter.’

(14) Laiškas/(yra) rašo-m-a rašo-m-as (tėvo).
letter.NOM.M.SG be.PRS.3 write.NEUT/write.PPRP-NOM.SG.M father.GEN
‘A letter is being written (by the father).’

The third argument comes from binding. In an active transitive clause, a structural subject like Domantas can be a controller of the reflexive possessive savo ‘one’s own’, but it cannot bind the non-reflexive pronoun jo ‘his’ (15a). On the other hand, the grammatical object must bind the non-reflexive form and it cannot be an antecedent of the reflexive savo (15b).

(15) a. Domantas, rūšiavo tarnautojus pagal *jo/savo įsitikinimus 
domantas.nom divided employees.ACC according his.GEN/own.gen beliefs
‘Domantas divided employees according to his own beliefs.’

b. Domantas rūšiavo tarnautojus pagal ju/*savo įsitikinimus 
domantas divided employees.ACC according their.GEN/own.gen beliefs
‘Domantas divided employees according to their beliefs.’ (Timberlake 1982:515–516)

In impersonals (16), just like in transitives (15b), the accusative theme also binds only the non-reflexive pronoun. Additionally, the understood indefinite subject behaves like a surface subject in (15a) and controls only the reflexive form (16). Hence, the binding facts also give additional support for a syntactic presence of a PRO subject in the impersonals. The theme argument of passives, on the other hand, binds both pronouns, the reflexive and non-reflexive (17).

(16) Kasmet PRO, (yra) rūšiuoja-m-a darbininkus pagal 
every.year be.PRS.3 divide.PPRP[-AGR] employees.ACC according 
savo/*ju/*jo įsitikinimus.
self.gen/their.gen/this.gen beliefs
(i) ‘Every year one divides employees, according to their beliefs.’
(ii) ‘Every year one divides employees according to one’s own beliefs.’

(17) Tarnautojai (yra) rūšiuoja-m-a Domantos pagal 
employees.M.PL.NOM be.PRS.3 divide.PPRP[-AGR] domantas.gen according 
savo/*ju/*jo įsitikinimus.
self.gen/their.gen beliefs
‘The employees, are divided by Domantas according to their, beliefs.’

Having illustrated parallels between the theme argument of impersonals and that of the active
transitive construction, I now turn to the general properties of impersonals and show how they diverge from those of passives. As has been already mentioned in Section 2, impersonals, unlike passives, do not allow the optional by-phrase which introduces a demoted agent (cf. 18–19). The unavailability of the by-phrase in impersonals indicates that the theta role of external argument in this instance is not suppressed, which is not the case in passives.

(18) (Yra) rašo-m-a laišką *tėvo.
    be.PRS.3 write.PPRP-[AGR] letter.ACC father.GEN
‘One is writing a letter.’

(19) Laiškas (yra) rašo-m-a (tėvo).
    letter.NOM.M.SG be.PRS.3 write.PPRP-[AGR] father.GEN
‘A letter is being written (by the father).’

The impersonals have an arbitrary PRO\(^6\) reading. Recall from (16) that PRO of the impersonal binds the reflexive pronoun behaving like a surface subject of a transitive clause. This understood subject is restricted to human entities. The initiator in the impersonal cannot be the animate nonhuman (21). This restriction does not apply to passives, the suppressed agent of passives can in fact be a non-human referent (21).

(20) *Kiene loja-m-a/biauna-m-a
    yard barking.PPRP-[AGR]/bleating.PPRP-[AGR]
Lit. ‘There is barking/bleating in the yard.’ (Wiener 2006:300)

(21) Vaikai buvo sugel-t-a (bičių).
    children.NOM be.PST.3 sting.PPRP-[AGR] bees.GEN
‘Children were stung (by bees).’

Impersonals are possible with verbs lacking an external argument such as unaccusatives (22a) and inchoatives (23a). If impersonals were passives, these constructions would be impossible because in general these predicates do not permit passives (22b–23b).

(22) a. Nuo gripo (yra) miršta-m-a kiekvienais metais. Impersonal
    from flu be.PRS.3 die.PPRP-[AGR] every year
‘One dies from flu every year.’

b. *Nuo gripo (yra) miršta-m-a žmonių kiekvienais metais. Passive
    from flu be.PRS.3 die.PPRP-[AGR] people.GEN every year
Intended: ‘It is died by people every year.’

(23) a. Plaukia-m-a įvairiais stiliais, o skęsta-m-a tik vienu. Impersonal
    swim.PPRP-[AGR] various styles, but sink.PPRP-[AGR] only one.INST
‘People swim in various styles, but sink in only one.’ (http://www.kamajugimnazija.lt/)

b. *Skęsta-m-a žmonių kiekvienais metais. Passive
    sink.PPRP-[AGR] people.GEN every year
Intended: ‘It is sunk by people every year.’

\(^6\)I have presented the understood subject of impersonals as an arbitrary PRO. Observe that the Lithuanian impersonal, just like Polish (Lavine 2005), licenses an understood subject which must be human and the referent is interpreted as arbitrary. The Polish impersonal is argued to lack agreement, which for Lavine (2005) is an argument for selecting a big PRO over a small pro. The small pro is typically considered to occur in finite clauses with a lexical verb showing agreement. The difference between the Lithuanian and Polish impersonal, as will be explicitly discussed in Section 4, is that the former allows an auxiliary, while the latter does not. The auxiliary in the Lithuanian impersonal shows agreement for person and tense, hence the possibility of pro is not completely ruled out.
To sum up, Table 1 provides a summary of diagnostics used in this section and compares them with facts from Polish and Ukrainian (data summary from Lavine 2005). The Lithuanian impersonal, just like the Polish impersonal and unlike the Ukrainian passive, does not allow a by-phrase, occurs with non-passivizable verbs and have an arbitrary PRO subject which is restricted to human referents. Just like a grammatical object of a transitive, the accusative theme argument of the impersonal allows the genitive of negation and binds the non-reflexive pronoun. The Lithuanian non-agreeing passive bears typical properties of canonical passives showing that its external argument is demoted and the theme argument surfaces like a grammatical subject.

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Table 1: Summary of diagnostics and comparison with Polish and Ukrainian.

4 Towards an Analysis

To account for the differences between the impersonal and the passive, the location of the \-ma/-ta participle with regards to other functional/lexical heads is discussed and evidence for two functional heads VoiceP and v-cause is provided. Having motivated the syntactic presence of VoiceP, it will be argued that the variations within VoiceP encode different types of voice constructions (at least two), the passive voice and the active voice.

A crucial property of the impersonals that helps to identify the location of the \-ma/-ta is the presence of an auxiliary. The \-ma/-ta participle and the auxiliary are not in complementary distribution as in (24). Thus, in this respect the impersonal patterns with the Ukrainian grammatical object passive which exhibits the same property (25). In contrast, the Polish impersonal (26) does not allow the auxiliary. For Polish, Lavine (2005) proposes the Auxiliary Hypothesis arguing that \-no/-to is an auxiliary element, which raises to T. The Lithuanian data reject this hypothesis and, on the other hand, show that \-ma/-ta is located lower than T.

(24) (Yra) rašo-m-a laišką *tėvo.  
be.PRS.3 write.PRP[-AGR] letter.ACC father.GEN
‘One is writing a letter.’

(25) Nemovlja bulo znajde-no u košyku.  
baby.ACC AUX found.-[-AGR] in basket
‘A baby was found in the basket.’

(26) Znaele-no niemowlę w koszu.  
found.-[-AGR] baby.ACC in basket
‘They found a baby in the basket.’ (Lavine 2005:76)

Instead of arguing for \-ma/-ta being an auxiliary, the central claim of this paper is that \-ma/-ta participle is a voice head located in VoiceP above a vP. VoiceP introduces an external argument, whereas vP introduces causative semantics. There is a wealth of literature arguing that vP performs a number of functions such as the introduction of an external argument (Chomsky 1995, Harley 1995), assignment of accusative case (Chomsky 1995, Kratzer 1996), representation of causative
semantics (Harley 1995, 2008). However, some studies show that the projections introducing causative semantics and external argument are separate (Pylkkänen 2008, Schäfer 2008, Harley 2013, Legate 2014). The Lithuanian impersonals and passives with causative morphology provide additional evidence for this separation.

Lithuanian has a suffix -in which causativizes non-causative inchoative verbs as exemplified in (27). In both impersonals (28) and passives (29), the causative morpheme and the -mal-ta participle occur simultaneously which suggests that v-cause and VoiceP are two separate heads.

(27) a. Jie aug-in-o rožes. Causative
   they.NOM grow-CAUSE-PST.3 roses.ACC
   ‘They were growing roses.’

   b. Rožės aug. Inchoative
   roses.NOM grow-PST.3
   ‘Roses were growing.’

(28) Rožės dažniausiai (yra) aug-*(in)-am-a saulėtoje, nuo roses.ACC most.often be.PRS.3 grow-CAUSE-PPRP-[AGR] sunny, from vėjo apsaugotoje vietoje.

   wind safe place
   ‘People often grow roses in a sunny and windproof place.’

(29) Rožės (yra) aug-*(in)-a-m-a (tėvo), roses.NOM.PL.F be.PRS.3 grow-CAUSE-PPRP-[AGR] father.GEN

   ‘Roses are being grown (by the father).’

VoiceP is independent of v-cause. The presence of VoiceP and the absence of v-cause are visible in cases whether the cause, a change of state, is missing but the Voice morphology is present. Hence, non-causative transitive verb like laikyti ‘keep’ can form both the passive (30b) and the impersonal (31) with voice morphology, and there is no change-of-state involved. While there is no v-cause, the external argument is still present in the active transitive like (30a), meaning that the introduction of an external argument should be disassociated from v-cause.

(30) a. Žmonės laiko laiškus namuose.
   people.NOM keep.PRS.3 letters.ACC home
   ‘People keep letters at home.’

   b. Laiškai (yra) laiko-m-a (žmonių) namuose.
   letters.NOM be.PRS.3 keep.PPRP.-[AGR] people.GEN home
   ‘Letters are being kept (by people) at home.’

(31) Dažnai (yra) laiko-m-a laiškus namuose.
   often be.PRS.3 keep.PRPV-[AGR] letters.ACC home
   ‘Often one keeps letters at home.’

The independence of v-cause from VoiceP can be seen in long passives. Lithuanian long passives are constructions like (32a) where the theme argument of a complement appears as the nominative surface subject in the matrix clause. Šereikaitė (2016) argues that these passives involves restructuring (Wurmbrand 2015). The long passive has an embedded vP complement with v-cause (32a), but lacks VoiceP (32b).

(32) a. Rožės, yra bando-m-os Petro [iš-aug-*(in)-ti tėvo]
   roses.NOM.PL.F be.PRS.3 try.PPRP-NOM.PL.F Petras.GEN [PRF-grow-CAUSE-INF ]


7Note that causative/inchoative alternation can also be encoded by a suffix -y, e.g., smilkti ‘to fume’, smilkti ‘to fumigate’ (for more see Ambrazas et al. 1997:225). Some of these alternations are a subject to phonological modifications within a root: e.g., laužyti ‘to break’ (transitive) vs. lūžti ‘to break’ (intransitive).
‘Roses are being tried to grow by Petras.’

b. *Rožės, yra bando-m-os Petro
   roses,NOM.PL,F  be.PRS.3 try.PPRP-NOM.PL,F Petras,GEN
   [būti iš-aug-in-am-os/iš-aug-in-m-a]
   [be-INF PRF-grow-CAUSE-PPRP-NOM.PL,F/PRF-grow-CAUSE-PPRP.[-AGR] ]

   Intended: ‘Roses are being tried to be grown by Petras.’

If the reasoning above holds true and VoiceP is an independent head of v-cause that introduces an external argument, then the variations within VoiceP can explain the difference between the passive and the impersonal. Recall that the impersonal has an arbitrary PRO reading and a grammatical object. To encode these properties, I propose that the impersonal is fronted, the binding relations do not change (36b), whereas the theme argument of passives binds both the reflexive and the non-reflexive form (36a). If the theme of the impersonal is fronted, the binding relations do not change (36b), meaning that it has undergone A-bar movement to a higher projection above a TP. In contrast, the fronted theme argument of passives binds both the reflexive and the non-reflexive form, showing that new binding relations have been established (37). This suggests that the theme argument in passives moved to SpecTP position via A-movement.

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8In this respect Lithuanian again patterns with the Polish impersonal with an accusative theme argument appearing post-verbally under neutral discourse (Lavine 2005).
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(36) a. Kasmet PRO (yra) rūšiuoja-m-a darbininkusi, pagal every.year be.PRS.3 divide.PPRP[-AGR] employees.ACC according
* savo/ jų išsitikinimus.
self.GEN/their.GEN beliefs
‘Every year one divides employees, according to their beliefs.’
b. Kasmet darbininkus, PRO (yra) rūšiuoja-m-a pagal every.year employees.ACC be.PRS.3 divide.PPRP[-AGR] according
* savo/ jų išsitikinimus.
self.GEN/their.GEN beliefs
‘Every year one divides employees, according to their beliefs.’

(37) Tarnautojai, (yra) rūšiuoja-m-a Domantą pagal employees.M.PL.NOM be.PRS.3 divide.PPRP[-AGR] Domantas.GEN according
savo/ jų išsitikinimus.
self.GEN/their.GEN beliefs
‘The employees are divided by Domantas according to their beliefs.’

I assume that T in Lithuanian has an EPP feature. Hence, in the impersonal with the fronted theme argument like in (36b), the EPP feature is satisfied by PRO subject raising to SpecTP, and the theme argument undergoes A-bar movement to TopP in (38a). In passives, the EPP feature is satisfied by raising the nominative theme argument to SpecTP as in (38b).

(38) a. Impersonal

b. Passive

5 Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that VoiceP and υ-cause are two separate heads: the former introduces an external argument and assigns accusative case, the latter is purely responsible for causative semantics. I followed Legate (2014) and proposed that variations within VoiceP allow explaining different configurations of voice, specifically the active and the passive. To support this claim, this paper analyzed the passive and the impersonal showing that the impersonal has a PRO subject in SpecVoiceP, whereas the passive lacks it. The Lithuanian impersonal exhibits properties of an active clause with an accusative grammatical subject and in this way patterns with the Polish impersonal active.
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