The Double Duty of the Sakha "Passive"

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1. Overview: Recent work by Legate & Akkuş (*to appear*) (L&A) on the Turkish morpheme /-Vl-/ has identified that the so-called 'double-passive' in fact instantiates an impersonal construction. While Turkish shows this morpheme doubling transparently, we present evidence from the related Siberian language Sakha that the originally bimorphemic impersonal marker has been reanalysed as a unitary morpheme which homophonously expresses both passive and impersonal functions. This paper: **i)** empirically clarifies the distributions of the Sakha passive and impersonal morphemes; **ii)** theoretically models their structural distinctions, further supporting L&A's syntactically-projected impersonal pronoun; **iii)** differentiates it from other detransitivising morphemes (e.g. anticausatives.)

2. Data: The Sakha passive morpheme has been described as /-n-/ following vowel-final stems and /-IlIn-/ elsewhere (Stachowski & Menz 1998:424; Vinokurova 2005:336; Ebata 2013:18.) This paper argues that the correct distribution is /-nIlIn-/ following vowel-final stems and /-IlIn-/ elsewhere, alternating with /-(n)IllI-/ before consonant-initial suffixes (1).

(1) a. min sie-**n**illi-bit-im
1SG eat-PASS-REM.PST-1SG
'I was eaten (a while ago).'

b. min tut-ullu-but-um
1SG catch-PASS-REM.PST-1SG
'I was caught (a while ago).' (Passive)

This description parallels allomorphy of the accusative /-(n)I-/, with confusion arising due to verbs like *ahaa-* 'eat' only taking the functionally similar anticausative morpheme /-(V)n-/.

2.1 Impersonal Constructions involve 'general' or unknown agents. The homophonous impersonal and passive morphemes are distinguishable by the following diagnostics:

Diagnostic	Passives	Impersonals	**Diagnostic**	Passives	Impersonals
Accusative Retention (2)	✗	✓	Agent Adverbs	✗	✓
Oblig. 3SG Agreement (2)	✗	✓	Matrix of ECM (4)	✗	✓
Oblig. Human Agent (3)	✗	✓	Matrix of Control	✗	✓
Intransitivity (3a)	✗	✓			

(2) a. yges-**ter**-(*ɨ) keh-illi-bet-**ter**
tradition-PL-(*ACC) break-PASS-NEG-PRES.3PL
'Customs are not broken' (Passive)

b. yges-**ter**-ɨ keh-illi-bet-∅
tradition-PL-ACC break-IMP-NEG-PRES.3SG
'One does not break customs' (Impersonal)

(3) a. *sa:s till-ill-a-r
spring bloom-IMP-PRES-3SG
Intended: 'In spring, one blooms' (AGENT: ✗Flowers)

b. #kɨhɨn køt-ull-e-r
winter fly-IMP-PRES-3SG
Intended: 'In winter, one flies' (AGENT: ✗Birds, ?Humans in planes)

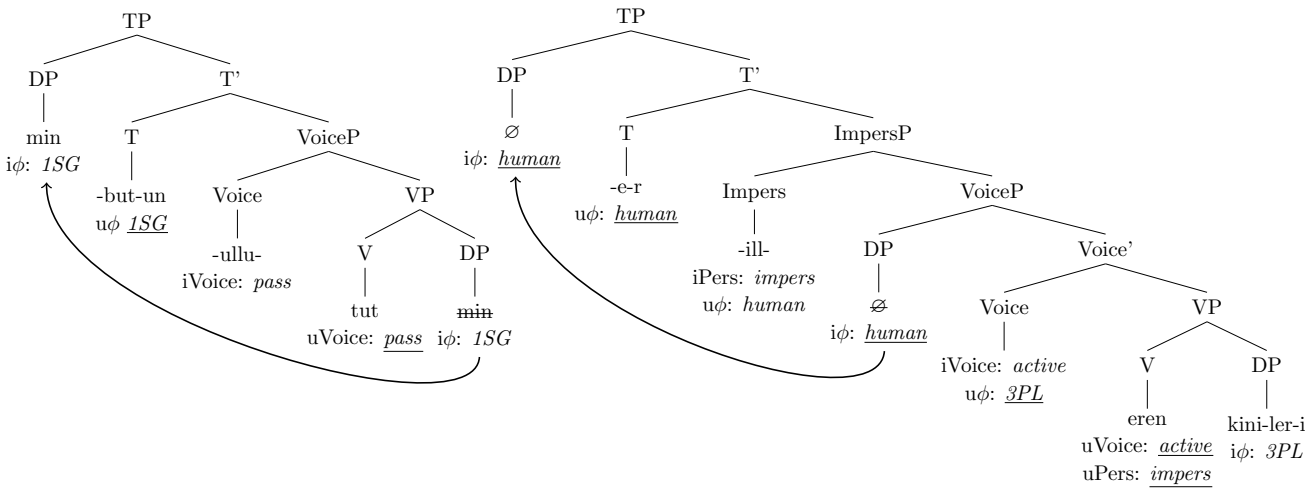
(4) a. *min/*migin [kɨaj-ɨa-m dien] eren-ill-e-bin
1SG/1SG.ACC win-FUT-1SG COMP hope-PASS-PRES-1SG
Intended: 'I am hoped to win' (Passive)

b. kini-ler-**i** [kɨaj-ɨaq-tara dien] eren-ill-e-r
3-PL-ACC win-FUT-3PL COMP hope-IMP-PRES-3SG
'One hopes that they win' (Impersonal)

3. Analysis: Following Legate (2014), the structure for the passive in (1b) and matrix impersonal in (4b) are as follows. The suffixal nature of Sakha morphemes can be derived via roll-up head movement of V through Voice and T.

(5) Passive

Impersonal



Drawing from L&A, the syntactically-projected impersonal pronoun merged in thematic AGENT position accounts for impersonal's ability to take agent-oriented adverbs like *sorujan* 'intentionally' and Control into embedded clauses. Unlike in the passive, there is no AGENT-suppression and THEME-promotion; there are thus two DPs in impersonals but only one in passives. This accounts for Accusative 'retention' (2b) and ECM of the raised DP (*kini-ler-i* in 4b) under either a configurational (Levin & Preminger 2015) or Agree-based theory of Case. For the former, our data also shows that implicit impersonal subjects serve as case competitors for dependent case assignment, but not supressed agents of passives, contra Baker (2015:202). Obligatory 3SG agreement comes from either a (Nominative) Case-sensitive Probe or the impersonal pronoun's lack of person or number features triggering default agreement (Egerland 2003). Similarly, that (unaccusative) intransitive verbs can be impersonal falls out from how no THEME or promotion is required, unlike in passives. Finally, L&A's *uϕ*: *human* feature ensures impersonals' human-only interpretation. In this way, the morphosyntactic distinctions between the passive and impersonal constructions fall out of the structures in (5), given a syntactically-projected impersonal pronoun.

4. Other Detransitivisers? We extend these tests to distinguish between the (nearly) homophonous reflexive and anticausative morpheme /-(V)n-/. The former may take agent-oriented adverbs but not the latter; anticausatives are obligatorily intransitive; reflexives only may Control into purpose clauses. We also elicited some novel forms, not yet discussed in the literature, where the entire passive morpheme in Sakha is doubled, resembling the Turkish impersonal 'double' passive:

(6) a. qos-ko yøret-ill-ill-e-r
room-DAT teach-PASS?-PASS?-PRES-3SG
'In the room, one has to be taught.'

b. ilim-inen tut-ull-ull-a-r
net-INST catch-PASS?-PASS?-PRES-3SG
'One is caught in a net.'

These forms seem to involve a passivised impersonal, with a 'general' or unknown person occurring as the THEME of the verb. However, elicitation suggests that there may be some inherent modal quality to these constructions. It is thus an open question as to what these morphemes are and whether they truly instantiate a synchronically doubled passive-impersonal morpheme.

References: Ebata (2013) *Causative and passive in Sakha.* Baker (2015) *Case: Its Principles and Parameters.* Egerland (2003) *Impersonal pronouns in Scandinavian and Romance.* Legate (2014) *Voice and v.* Legate & Akkuş (to appear) *Turkish Passive Impersonals.* Levin & Preminger (2015) *Case in Sakha: are two modalities really necessary?.* Stachowski & Menz (1998) *Yakut.* Vinokurova (2005) *Lexical categories and argument structure.*