Lithuanian Evidentials and Passives of Evidentials

Julie Anne Legate & Milena Šereikaitė, University of Pennsylvania

1. Introduction: Lithuanian has been argued to exhibit passives of passives (Timberlake 1982, Baker et al. 1989, Bruening 2013, Kiparsky 2013 ia), thereby counterexemplifying Perlmutter and Postal’s (1977) claim that passives cannot passivize. (1) illustrates; note that both the thematic subject and the theme appear in genitive case, as is characteristic of the passive ‘by’-phrase.

(1) To lapelio buta vėjo nupustu.
that. GEN leaf. GEN be.PASS. NOM wind. GEN blow. PASS. GEN
‘by that leaf there was blown down by the wind’ (Kiparsky 2013:24) (glosses, translation retained)

An alternative analysis has been proposed (see Blevins 2003, Lavine 2006, 2010), whereby the construction in (1) is an evidential of a passive, with the evidential itself not passive in form. We provide extensive argumentation showing that the evidential analysis is correct, and provide a new syntactic analysis of the evidential that explains its properties. The construction is thus revealed to not require passives of passives to be accommodated into the theory of passives; rather the construction provides evidence for the structural position of evidentiality in the clause.

2. Evidential vs Passive: We begin by providing ten arguments to distinguish the passive from the evidential in Lithuanian. I) The evidential is interpreted as inferential based on visual evidence, (2), whereas the passive is neutral for evidentiality, (3). II) No finite auxiliary is possible in the evidential, (2), whereas the passive has a finite auxiliary, obligatory in the past tense, (3). III) The verb in both constructions occurs as a passive participle, marked by -m (present) / -t (past), but in the evidential this participle appears in the non-agreeing neuter form, (2), whereas in the passive it optionally agrees with the nominative subject, (3).

(2) Vėjo (*buv-o) nupsū-t-a tas
wind. GEN be.PST.3 blow-PTCP-N that
lapelis.
leaf. NOM. M.SG
‘The wind must have blown down that leaf.’

(3) Tas lapelis *(buv-o) vėjo
that. NOM. M.SG be-PST.3 wind. GEN
nupūs-t-as/-a.
blow-PTCP-NOM. M.SG /-N
‘That leaf was blown down (by the wind).’

IV) The genitive in the evidential patterns as a DP argument in being obligatory (modulo pro-drop), (4), while the genitive in the passive is optional as a PP adjunct, (5). V) The genitive in the evidential neutrally occurs clause initially, as a subject, (4), while the genitive in the passive neutrally occurs immediately before the participle, or finally, (5).

(4) *(Vėjo) nupsū-t-a tas lapelis.
wind. GEN blow-PTCP-N that lapelis.
‘The wind must have blown down that leaf.’

(5) Tas lapelis buv-o (vėjo)
that. NOM. M.SG be-PST.3 wind. GEN
nupūs-t-as (vėjo).
blow-PTCP-NOM. M.SG wind. GEN
‘That leaf was blown down by the wind.’

VI) The genitive in the evidential behaves like a subject in binding the subject-oriented anaphor savo, (6), whereas the genitive in the passive cannot, (7). VII) The nominative theme in the transitive evidential behaves as an object in binding the anti-subject-oriented pronoun, (6); the nominative theme in the passive behaves as a subject in binding the subject-oriented anaphor, (7).

(6) Vakar Domant-o, rūšiuo-t-a tarnautoj-ai k
yesterday Domantas-M.SG.GEN divide-PTCP-N employee-M.PL.NOM according.to self.GEN /
juguj / *joj, įsitikinim-us.
their.GEN / his.GEN belief-M.PL.ACC
‘Yesterday Domantas, must have divided employees according to self’s / their beliefs.’
The employees were divided by Domantas according to self’s beliefs.

The father must have been a pilot.

Jonas must have died yesterday.

That leaf must have been blown off (its branch) (by the wind).

We carefully showed that (1) is not a passive of a passive, but an evidential of a passive; consistent with Perlmutter & Postal’s claim that passives do not passivize. We further argued that the Lithuanian evidential supports EvidP below TP, rather than only in the CP domain.
References


