

Voice and Case: lessons from nominalizations without passives

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This study provides new empirical discoveries with consequences for Case Theory and the typology of Voice. In this talk, I explore the properties of Voice and case in Lithuanian complex event nominalizations (CENs). Specifically, I counterexemplify two important generalizations. First, CENs have been claimed to exhibit an ergative case-marking (Alexiadou 2001, 2017; Salanova 2007; Imanishi 2014), which is the result of the presence of a non-active, defective Voice (Alexiadou 2017). In contrast, evidence from Lithuanian demonstrates that CENs have two distinct structural genitive cases, a possessive genitive and a non-possessive genitive, which are analogous to a nominative-accusative case pattern found in active transitive constructions. CENs show that the two genitive cases cannot be viewed as one and the same unmarked case as generally assumed in Dependent Case Theory (Marantz 1991; Baker 2015). Second, CENs, just like passives, have been claimed to demote an external argument (Grimshaw 1990; Alexiadou 2017). However, a striking property of Lithuanian CENs is that they do not include passivization. While both CENs and passives have a head that introduces an external argument θ -role, CENs differ from passives in that they have a projected external argument whereas passives lack it (Sichel 2009, 2010; Bruening 2013). Furthermore, the theme argument in CENs behaves like a grammatical object with structural object case, whereas the theme in passives advances to nominative subject. Overall, this study demonstrates that CENs can have a transitive structure that is also present in the verbal domain.

The Lithuanian pattern is captured by extending a Voice-bundling approach (Pylkkänen 2008; Harley 2017) to the nominal domain. A Voice-bundling parameter has been mostly explored in the verbal domain. In Voice-splitting languages, VoiceP and v P are separate projections, which perform different functions, whereas in Voice-bundling languages there is a single v /Voice projection, which serves all functions that v and Voice would perform independently (Folli et al. 2005; Pylkkänen 2008; Harley 2013, 2017; Legate 2014, etc). Lithuanian CENs show that Voice-bundling can also be found in the nominal domain. I argue that CENs have a special type of nominal Voice, namely n_{VoiceP} , which performs the functions of both a nominalizing n head and an active thematic Voice (also see Punske 2010, 2012). Just like n , n_{voice} nominalizes the verbal structure. This head also behaves like an active thematic Voice in that it introduces an external argument and assigns structural object case, namely non-possessive genitive, to the theme. This analysis is supported not only by the transitive case pattern, but also by the lack of passivization and Voice morphology in CENs, which is expected under a Voice-bundling approach. These CENs sharply contrast with Lithuanian verbal transitive clauses where VoiceP is an independent projection that does not exhibit the properties of bundling (Šereikaitė 2020). Identifying this type of dichotomy enriches the typology of Voice in important ways and suggests that a Voice-bundling parameter can vary across domains within a single language.

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