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*The Lithuanian Language Institute, Vilnius***COMPLEX (BI-CLAUSAL) PASSIVES IN LATVIAN AND LITHUANIAN AND THEIR CONNECTION WITH THE NOMINATIVE OBJECT¹**

A characteristic feature of the Lithuanian and Latvian passive is the common occurrence of bi-clausal (complex) passives. This type of passive promotes to the status of subject of the passive construction an accusative object contained in an embedded clause representing the propositional object of the passivised verb. The participle which is part of the passive verb form then usually shows agreement with this subject in number and gender. This rule can be illustrated with (1) and (2). In Lithuanian, we must add to this a variety without agreement of the participle with the nominative noun phrase, illustrated by (1'). This variety, which is becoming increasingly rare (cf. Ambrizas, ed., 1994, 323), will be discussed further on, as it played a crucial part in the syntactic processes dealt with in this paper. Note that, semantically, we would expect passivisation to affect the verbs *statyti*, *celt*: what is referred to is the beginning of a situation in which the house is being built. But these verbs occur as predicates of embedded infinitive clauses dependent on the phasal verbs *pradėti*, *iesąkti*, which, as main clause verbs, are the only candidates for passivisation. The result is that *pradėti statyti*, *iesąkti celt* are treated as complex verb phrases which are passivised in their entirety, so that the object of the infinitive becomes main clause subject even though it is the phasal verb that is passivised (cf. Keenan, 1985, 272).

(1) *Namas pradėtas statyti.*(1') *Namas pradėta statyti.*(2) *Māja iesākta celt.*

lit. 'The house was begun to build.'

This rule is basically optional, though failure to apply it sometimes leads to constructions that are decidedly less natural than those in which the bi-clausal passive is applied. The alternative is a construction where the object of the embedded clause is not promoted to subject, and the passive is therefore impersonal, i.e., the participle has no subject to agree with in gender and number, and it occurs in the form used as

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the result of neutralisation of the number and gender opposition: in Lithuanian this will be the neuter singular form, and in Latvian (for want of neuter forms) the masculine singular form. This rule may be illustrated with (3) and (4).

(3) Pradėta statyti namą.

(4) Iesākts celt māju.

The exact syntactic interpretation of these sentences is not clear. Instead of saying that these passives are impersonal (subjectless), we might also say that they have propositional subjects. The only way for the passive participles to agree with a subject clause would also be the use of the neuter singular form in Lithuanian, and the masculine singular form in Latvian. However, a disadvantage of such an interpretation would be that it would be less easy to account for the use of the genitive of negation in the negative variety of (3) in Lithuanian (Latvian evidence would not be relevant here, because Latvian has largely abandoned the genitive of negation), cf. (5).

(5) Nepradėta statyti namų.

Though intransitive subjects frequently occur in the genitive in Lithuanian, it is not warranted that this rule will also apply to the objects of subject clauses in the same way as the genitive of negation rule extends to the objects of object clauses. Therefore it might seem preferable to interpret (5) as an impersonal passive retaining the object case marking of the active construction, i.e. the genitive of negation (cf. *nepradėjo statyti namų*).

In the case of (1–4) the impersonal passive (3–4) is probably less idiomatic in both languages than the bi-clausal passive (1–2), as phasal verbs such as Lith. *pradėti*, Latv. *iesākt* ‘begin’, Lith. *baigti*, Latv. *beigt* ‘finish’, seem to be among those preferring the bi-clausal passive. With the verbs Lith. *(pa)bandyti*, Latv. *mēģināt* ‘attempt, try’ the result would be the reverse: here the impersonal construction (6, 8) would be more natural, but the bi-clausal passive (7, 9) would also be possible.

(6) Čia buvo pabandyta pastatyti namą.

(7) Čia namas buvo pabandytas pastatyti.

(8) Te mēģināts uzcelt māju.

(9) Te mēģināta uzcelt māja.

Bi-clausal passives, derived from complex verb phrases containing ‘verbs of intent, desire and aspect’ (Keenan, 1985, 272) are common in some languages, but in most European languages they are probably more or less occasional features. Bi-clausal passives occasionally occur in German (*die Frage wurde zu lösen versucht* ‘the problem was attempted to solve’, i.e., ‘an attempt was made to solve the problem’) and probably their frequency is not much higher in most other European languages.

The modern Slavonic languages do not seem to have such bi-clausal passives at all. Their frequency in the Baltic languages is striking, and it might be interesting to inquire whether there is a special reason for this, or whether it is a mere coincidence.

It should be noted that the scope of bi-clausal passives in both extant Baltic languages is not exactly the same. It seems to be especially wide in Latvian, where it is observed even in the case of modal verbs such as *varēt* 'be able' and *gribēt* 'want', as illustrated in (10). In Lithuanian the bi-clausal passive does not seem to be possible with modal verbs such as *turėti*, *galėti*, *norėti*. In the case of the first two, the reason might be that these have their impersonal equivalents *reikia* 'it is necessary', *galima* 'it is possible', used when reference to the agent is to be avoided – and avoidance of reference to the agent is precisely one of the reasons for using the passive.

- (10) Puisis agrāk nevarēts no vecās sievas prom dabūt, kamēr zāle noņemta
(K. Straubergs, *Latviešu tautas paražas*)
'The young fellow could not be torn away from the old women until the herb was taken away.'

Two further instances of this construction are cited by Endzelin from the Latvian dialect of Lizums, which proves that we are dealing with a living construction, not with a stylistic device of the literary language:

- (11) *kā apcietinātais gribāts vest uz muižu, tā ceļā izbēdzs* (E n d z e l i n 1951, 984)
'When an attempt was made to take the prisoner to the manor, he fled on the way there.'
- (12) *tuornis nav varāts uzcelt do golam* (ibid.)
'It was not possible to complete the tower / the tower could not be completed.'

This seems to occur mainly in the relative (oblique) mood, the formal marker of which is the use of participles instead of finite verb forms. Usually the finite verb form is replaced by the past active participle in narrative texts requiring the use of the oblique mood, but verb forms referring to indefinite or generic subjects can be replaced with impersonal passives. This will often be the case with such forms as *var* 'one can, it is possible'. One may observe this in (13), where the active and passive participle occur next to each other:

- (13) *Saimniece viņu ielaidusi savā istabā, kur pa vaļējām durvīm varēts redzēt, kad kundze iznāks.*
'The story goes that the landlady let him into her room, from where it was possible to watch through the open door when the lady would come out.'

The construction used in (10–12) is a variety of this, but here the verb is transitive, and its object is optionally promoted to main clause subject. There is no need to

stress that such constructions, involving passivisation of a modal verb, are not very common typologically. The general tendency seems to be for modal verbs to be treated as auxiliaries, the status of which is often comparable to that of tense auxiliaries. They rarely undergo passivisation, and lack of passivisation has even been cited as a characteristic feature of modal verbs. The reason is that at least some modal verbs express predicates with just one propositional argument, and are indifferent to changes of grammatical relations within the clause expressing this propositional argument; they are therefore insensitive to passivisation (cf. *John can/must pay the bill : The bill can/must be paid by John*).

These passive constructions have their counterparts in constructions with adnominal passive participles, illustrated by (14–15). Semantically, a relation of object to predicate exists between the noun and the infinitive rather than between the noun and the participle.

- (14) Vēlāk, kad iepazinu apkārtni, saskaitīju pavisam septiņas mājas, un vēl dažas iesāktas celt (J. Jaunsudrabiņš)
 ‘Afterwards, as I began to be familiar with the neighbourhood, I counted seven houses in all, and a few more under construction [lit. begun to be constructed]’
- (15) ... ka zaļas grīdsegas, aizmirstas saritināt gājienam kaut kur pazūdot (E. Virza)
 ‘... like green carpets which someone had forgotten to roll up after the procession had disappeared somewhere’

Similar constructions would be possible in Lithuanian: *pradėti statyti namai; kilimai, užmiršti suvynioti (suvynioti užmirštas kilimas)* etc.

Before proceeding to discuss the passive constructions mentioned above, I would like to draw attention to an interesting parallel to this feature, to be observed in Latvian. As is known, the Latvian debitive construction is similar to the passive one in that the accusative object of the corresponding basic active construction is replaced by a nominative. This nominative is generally interpreted as an object, unlike that occurring in a passive construction (for a discussion cf. F e n n e l l, 1973), but still it is worth noting that the rules determining the shift from accusative to nominative are exactly parallel in both constructions. Now in those cases where a bi-clausal passive can be derived, a similar phenomenon is possible in the debitive construction:

- (16) Māja ir jāsāk celt.
 lit. ‘The house must be begun to build.’
- (17) Māja ir sākta celt.
 lit. ‘The house was begun to build.’

I have attempted to show in an earlier publication (Holvoet, 1993) that the nominative in such complex debitive structures might be equally ancient as that occurring in the basic variety of the debitive. It is known that the debitive arose from a complex structure involving a non-finite relative clause with the subject of an existential clause as its antecedent: *Māja ir jāceļ* arose from a construction of the type *Ir māja, ko celt*; and, if this is so, then we have every reason to believe that *Māja ir jāsāk celt* could be derived from *Ir māja, ko sākt celt*. There is thus no reason to assume a connection between the bi-clausal passive illustrated above and what we could call, by analogy, the 'bi-clausal debitive'. Nevertheless, the parallelism is striking, and it is quite conceivable that the retention (or the rise, if one disbelieves the above explanation) of this bi-clausal debitive could have been favoured by the existence of a bi-clausal passive. This seems the more probable as the conditions on the use of the nominative are exactly the same in passive and debitive constructions: it can be derived only from an accusative object, but, on the other hand, it also extends to non-object accusatives, i.e., accusatives of temporal and spatial extension (cf. Holvoet, 1992).

The bi-clausal passive has already been discussed in the literature. Examples are cited by Fraenkel (1928, 15):

(18) *Piršlys baigiamas karti.*

'The hanging of the matchmaker is almost finished.'

In Fraenkel's view, the infinitive is here added epexegetically to a construction with a passive participle, the construction is complete even without the infinitive, which is added to provide additional information on the exact nature of the action denoted by the participle. This interpretation is in fact suggested by two other examples cited by Fraenkel:

(19) *kaip awys uszmushti patiektas (Vilentas)*

'wie Schafe, die zum Schlachten fertig sind'

(20) *anà jau ýra nu gāndru apsūdyta nugābyti (Schleicher-Kurschat)*

'zum Tode verurteilt'

The epexegetical status of the infinitive is clear in these two instances. Neither *pateikti* nor *apsūdyti* can have a propositional object: both verbs will take nouns as their objects, and the infinitive will have the status of an adverbial phrase expressing purpose. The case of (18) is clearly different, as only an embedded clause, not an animate noun phrase like *piršlys*, can be taken to be a complement of *baigti*.

Fraenkel regards (18–20) as a special case of a construction in which an infinitive is added to a predicative adjective, the nominative subject of which is at the same time, from the semantic point of view, the object of the infinitive. This type is illustrated in (21–22), cited after Fraenkel (1928, 14):

(21) *kaip tai indiwna ir sakiti ira* (Wolfenbüttel Post.)

'as it is even strange to say'

(22) *dùmples yr' naudingas dáikts i kaminą pústi* (Donelaitis)

'bellows are a useful thing to kindle a fire'

As a third type connected with both former ones Fraenkel cites constructions with the adjective in the neuter form:

(23) *ir szitie sopulei ne sūku kēst'* (Daukša, Post.)

'and these pains are not hard to suffer'

Fraenkel regards this construction as a subtype of the one shown in (21–22), and explains the lack of agreement by assuming substantivisation of the adjective (*sunku* 'something difficult'). As is known, alternative explanations have been offered for such constructions.

In his publications on the syntax of the Baltic participles and of the infinitive, Ambrazas (1990, 1993) does not explicitly mention the Baltic bi-clausal passives, but an explanation along similar lines as that proposed by Fraenkel is suggested by the parallel he draws between the Lithuanian passives with non-agreeing neuter participles (*rugiai sėta*) and constructions such as (23) or the Latvian construction *nuosūnuojis akmins grūti kustināt* (cited after Endzeliņš, 1951, 553). In both cases, Ambrazas (1990, 202–205; 1993, 87) argues, a neuter adjective or participle was used predicatively with a nominative subject regardless of the gender of this subject (a feature well attested in several archaic IE languages). After the loss of neuter nouns, a reanalysis took place. The neuter forms, which had been formerly the unmarked member of the gender opposition, now became unsuitable for nominal agreement and began to function as impersonal predicators. Clauses with neuter adjectives or participles were now felt to be impersonal and the nominative was reanalysed as an object, i.e. as the object of the participle in constructions with a neuter participle (*sėta rugiai*) or as the object of the infinitive in constructions like (23). Once interpreted as an object, the nominative began to be gradually ousted by the accusative. If this is so, then it seems reasonable to assume that *namas pradėtas statyti* reflects an original construction *namas pradėta statyti*, with the neuter form of the participle. In a construction like this, the nominative could either be the object of the infinitive *statyti* or that of the impersonal passive *pradėta*. Disambiguation of the syntactic status of the nominative noun phrase became inevitable only at the moment when agreement features were introduced. In Lithuanian this process is not completed yet, and constructions like (1') still occur. In Latvian it is now completed, and we have mere relics of the original state of affairs. Mühlenbach, for instance, cites a construction like:

(24) *Man ir atļauts rieksti ēst* (E n d z e l i n-M ü h l e n b a c h, 1907, 207)
'I am allowed to eat (the) nuts'

Here the masculine singular form has supplanted the original neuter form of the participle as the default gender form, because Latvian lost the original neuter forms. Still, the status of this masculine participle is the same as that of the neuter participle in (1'). This type was the oldest one; later on, agreement of the participle with the nominative subject could be introduced, or the nominative could be replaced with the accusative. This gave rise to both types co-existing nowadays: *man ir atļauti rieksti ēst* and *man ir atļauts riekstus ēst*. If this reconstruction is correct, then both types, the bi-clausal passive and its impersonal alternative, are equally ancient.

It must be noted that the complete loss of neuter forms in Latvian, including the loss of neuter adjectives and participles, probably resulted in an earlier elimination of the construction without agreement of the participle. The masculine singular form of the participle, which was substituted for the original neuter form, is still quite normal in impersonal passives if there is no noun phrase that could be a candidate for promotion-to-subject, e.g., *Ir dziedāts* 'there has been some singing, singing has been going on'. But, unlike the original neuter forms, which had become unsuitable for nominal agreement, the masculine form could be used both in constructions with and without agreement. As a result, constructions like (24) became anomalous, because the corresponding constructions with a singular masculine object, e.g., *Man ir atļauts piens dzert* 'I am allowed to drink milk', could be reanalysed as showing agreement of the participle with the subject.

As is known, Ambrazas' explanation, involving the reanalysis of constructions with non-agreeing participles inherited from IE, is not the only one available. For constructions such as (23) and (24), an explanation involving the influence of a Baltic Fennic syntactic pattern has been advanced, and these constructions have been compared to similar phenomena in the North Russian dialects. In Baltic Fennic, the object of an infinitive dependent on an impersonal verb or predicative expression is in the nominative. The hypothesis of Fennic substratum influence cannot be considered proven, but if we accept it, then this does not alter the above statement of a link between the nominative object and the bi-clausal passive. The latter has not been separately mentioned in the literature on the nominative object and its Fennic connections, with the exception of the subtype characterised by lack of agreement of the participle with the nominative, illustrated by (23). Timberlake, who provides the most elaborate statement of the substratum hypothesis, regards the lack of agreement as a distinguishing feature of the Baltic (and North Russian) constructions, opposing them to the constructions with agreement attested in other IE languages (cf., e.g., Old Czech *čbán je mi těžek nésti* 'the jug is heavy for me to carry'). In this he differs from Ambrazas, who emphasises the coexistence of both constructions, with and

without agreement of the predicative adjective with the subject, in the inherited IE model. Ambrazas is inclined to adhere to Kiparsky's view (Kiparsky, 1969) according to which Fennic influence contributed to the retention of an existing syntactic pattern that would have quickly disappeared without its support (Ambrazas, 1993, 96, and the relevant literature cited there), though he concedes that Fennic must also have played a certain part in the process of reanalysis of the original subject as a nominative object (Ambrazas, 1997, 98). Another decisive argument, in Timberlake's view, is the recursiveness of the nominative object rule, i.e. the fact of its being applied also to the objects of embedded infinitive clauses occupying the same syntactic position as a nominative object. As an instance of recursiveness Timberlake cites the Latvian debitive, where the nominative object rule is extended to the objects of embedded clauses, cf. *Māja ir jāceļ* and *Māja ir jāsāk celt*. As mentioned above, the Latvian debitive, though providing a nice illustration of the recursiveness principle, does not have any conclusive force, because it can be shown that the debitive arose from a complex structure in which the subsequent object was really the subject of an existential clause, and that this explanation can be extended to debitive constructions with embedded clauses. The bi-clausal passive discussed here would be a better example. We may easily note that the bi-clausal passive constructions (including the type with agreement) might reflect a Fennic model in which the nominative is used both for the object of an impersonal verb form and for the object of an infinitive dependent on an impersonal verb form. On this assumption as well, the construction *man ir atļauts rieksti ēst* would be the most archaic one, and both extant types would have evolved from it. The Fennic passive is a kind of impersonal construction: the object of the corresponding active construction is in the nominative, but there are no agreement features allowing this nominative noun phrase to be identified as a subject. If the Proto-Baltic passive was similar to it, it must also have been impersonal, i.e., it must have been of the type *rugiai sēta* (with *rugiai* as a nominative object). In course of time, as the infinitive (originally a verbal noun) developed into a verbal form, this rule must then have been extended to construction with embedded infinitives, such as *rugiai norēta sēti*. Later on, as agreement features were introduced, there were two possible developments, a bi-clausal passive and an impersonal passive.

No matter how the Proto-Baltic constructions of the type *rugiai sēta* are to be explained (i.e., no matter whether we accept or reject the notion of a Fennic model for this construction), some kind of connection with the bi-clausal passive seems highly probable. This connection is of a historical nature only, and we should not expect any direct synchronic link between both features, especially with regard to their geographical distribution. Ambrazas (1993, 89, 97) notes that the nominative object is attested on sundry spots spread over a wide area in both Lithuanian and Latvian, which makes it look like a relic of a once widespread syntactic pattern rather

than an innovation. The bi-clausal passive can be found in both Lithuanian and Latvian, with minor differences: generally speaking, the construction seems to have been better retained in Lithuanian, but, on the other hand, Latvian has some varieties that do not seem to occur in Lithuanian (e.g., with modal verbs). At any rate, the bi-clausal passive seems to be an indirect reflex of a state of affairs that, except for isolated relics, has not been retained as such, viz., the use of non-agreeing predicative participles and the nominative object of the impersonal passive.

KAI KURIOS LIETUVIŲ IR LATVIŲ KALBŲ NEVEIKIAMOSIOS RŪŠIES YPATYBĖS IR JŲ RYŠYS SU OBJEKTO VARDININKU

S a n t r a u k a

Straipsnyje aptariama lietuvių ir latvių kalbų „kompleksinio pasyvo“ kilmė. Šiuo terminu yra apibūdinamas neveikiamosios rūšies tipas, kur nuo pagrindinio predikatinio veiksmazodžio priklausomos bendraties objektas tampa sakinio subjektu vietoj beasmenės neveikiamosios rūšies konstrukcijos, išlaikančios objekto galininką su bendratimi, pvz.: lie. *Namai pradėti statyti* (šalia *Namus pradėta statyti*), la. *Māja iesākta celt* (šalia *Māju iesākts celt*). Nors kompleksinis pasyvas pasitaiko ir kai kuriuose kitose kalbose, baltų kalbose jis ypač dažnas. Jo dažnumas greičiausiai yra susijęs su objekto nominatyvu, būdingu baltų kalboms. Galimas dalykas, kad ši konstrukcija yra susijusi ne tik su bendraties vardininko objektu, bet ir su *rugiai sėta* tipo konstrukcijomis, apie kurias yra rašęs Vytautas Ambrazas. Jo nuomone, konstrukcijose su nederinamuoju bevardės giminės dalyviu (*rugiai sėta*) pakito vardažodžio sintaksinė funkcija: nykstant bevardės giminės daiktavardžiams tokius sakinius pradėta interpretuoti kaip beasmenius, vardažodis juose įgijo objekto funkciją. Jeigu ši interpretacija yra teisinga, tai galima manyti, kad, kai į konstrukciją su priklausoma bendratimi (*rugiai pradėta sėti*) buvo įsivestas derinimas, iš jos galėjo susiformuoti du variantai: *rugiai pradėti sėti* arba *rugius pradėta sėti*. Tokiai šių konstrukcijų raidos interpretacijai neprieštarauja ir Timberlake'o teorija apie objekto vardininko atsiradimą dėl finų kalbų įtakos. Nepaisant to, kurią teoriją laikysime teisinga, atrodo, kad minėtas neveikiamosios rūšies konstrukcijų tipas yra netiesioginis objekto nominatyvo atspindys; šis konstrukcijos tipas vartojamas net ir ten, kur objekto nominatyvas nebuvo išlaikytas (pvz., latvių kalbos konstrukcija *Rudzi iesākti sēt* šalia *Rudzus iesākts sēt* liudija apie ankstesnį reliktniu pavidalu išlikusio tipo *Rudzi iesākts sēt* buvimą).

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