What is dependent Case dependent on? A case study from Slavic

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Accusative case (Acc) is often analyzed as a dependent Case, where being dependent means being dependent on another argument (Burzio, 1986) or dependent on a chain assigning Nominative case (Nom) to another argument (Marantz, 1991). I present a case study of a construction that cannot be accounted for by either of these families of approaches: an instantiation of *have*-perfect traditionally analyzed as an impersonal passive (Borsley, 1988; Nedashkivska Adams, 1998; Blevins, 2003; Lavine and Freidin, 2002; Lavine, 2005, 2010). I argue that this construction differs from the canonical passive in that vP is a strong phase and as such is subject to Spell-out (Chomsky 2001, 2005, 2008, contra Legate 2003). Once the vP phase is spelled-out, the morphological realization of the Case assignment cannot be changed. Thus, Acc is in principle independent of the presence of Nom or a Nom assigner (contra Sigurðsson 2006, to appear): the only relevant factor is whether or not vP is a Spell-out domain. I provide evidence that in this case, the phase boundary stems from the semantics of the construction. Data come from Polish, Ukrainian and North Russian dialects.

Puzzle: Slavic so-called impersonal passives, aka the *-no/-to construction* (*NT*) lack an external argument and yet the internal argument (IA) gets Acc in a violation of Burzio's generalization. Even though the construction superficially resembles the canonical passive, it differs from it in several important respects: **(i)** IA in NT is realized as Acc instead of Nom, (1). **(ii)** There is no overt Tense marking, (1). **(iii)** the verb does not agree with IA. **(iv)** NT *must* be interpreted as Past, (2) v. (3). **(v)** NT IA must be interpreted as focus, while the passive IA may be interpreted as given. The contrast can roughly be captured by the corresponding English articles, (1). **(vi)** *Ukrainian* and *North Russian dialects* NT has an optional auxiliary but even then Tense is restricted to Past and Future; Present is always excluded, (4). None of the existing proposals accounts for (iv-vi).

Proposal: I argue that the key for analyzing NT lies in its semantics. As has been recognized in dialectology and traditional descriptive linguistics (Kuz'mina and Nemčenko, 1971; Maslov, 1984; Trubinskij, 1988; Kuz'mina, 1993; Leinonen, 2002; Danylenko, 2006), the syntactic distribution of NT resembles the West-European *habere* Perfect. I argue that NT is indeed a perfect construction: If the perfect interpretation is enforced by the context, passive constructions, i.e., constructions with Nom, are excluded, (5). Furthermore, the passive participle morphology is cross-linguistically often identical to the perfect participle morphology (Iatridou et al., 2001). However, there are significant syntactic differences: (i) The canonical passive in these languages may contain two independent aspectual and negation projections (Veselovská and Karlík, 2004) but only one of each is allowed in NT. (ii) The NT ending is a participle ending but the canonical passive inflects as a deverbal adjective (Sobin, 1985; Lavine, 2000; Danylenko, 2006). Since NT is *have*-Perfect, it contains a covert 'have' structure in the sense of Kayne (1993). The relevant property of *have* is that it is inherently transitive. In turn, this transitive property turns vP into a strong phase. At the point of Spell-out, IA is assigned Acc by *v*. After C/T is merged, Nom remains unassigned because the IA has already been spelled-out: Since the IA is interpreted as focus, it does not raise to the edge of vP and therefore it cannot enter a feature-checking relation with C/T without violating the PIC. The difference between the NT with and without an auxiliary is a property of T: If there is no valued Tense feature on T, there is no auxiliary and the resulting interpretation is Past as the default interpretation for tense-less languages (Bohnemeyer and Swift, 2004). Since Perfect is semantically incompatible with Present, a valued Tense feature on T may be only Past or Future. Finally, IA optionally surfaces preverbally without a change in the case assignment. This follows from the semantics of NT: fronting of the IA is an instance of left-periphery focus, (iv), and as such it only arises at PF (Fanselow & Lenertová 2010), with no effect on feature valuation.

(1)   a.   Kobietę   *(było)zabito.
          woman.ACC *(was)   killed
          'A woman was killed.'   *NT (Polish)*
     b.   Kobieta   była/została zabita.
          woman.NOM was/stayed killed
          'The/*A woman was killed.'   *regular passive (Polish)*

(2)   Samochód jest/był/będzie malowany.
     car.NOM   is/was/will-be painted
     'The car is/was/will be painted.'

(3)   *Teraz/✓Wczoraj/*Jutro opisano   problem.
     now/yesterday/tomorrow described.NEUT.SG problem.MASC.SG.ACC
     "The problem *is/*was/*will be described *now/yesterday/*tomorrow.'
                                                          *Present–✓Past–*Future

(4)   Presidenta   bulo/*jest/bude vbyto/vbyvato.
     president.ACC was/is/will-be   Perf/killed.Imperf
     'A/The president was killed.'   *✓Past–*Present–Future*

(5)   a. *Anna   jest szczęśliwa od   kiedy jej syn   był   zabrany.
         Anna.NOM is   happy   since then her son.ACC stayed taken-away
         Intended: 'Anna has been happy since her son has been sent away.'   *canonical passive*
     b. Anna   jest szczęśliwa od   kiedy jej syna   zabrano.
         Anna.NOM is   happy   since then her son.ACC taken-away
         'Anna has been happy since her son has been sent away.'   *NT*

(6)   a. Zadanie   było ✓rozwiązane/*rozwiązano.
         task.NOM was solved.ADJ/solved.PP
         'The task was solved.'   *canonical passive*
     b. Zadanie *rozwiązane/✓rozwiązano.
         task.ACC solved.ADJ/solved.PP
         'The task was solved'   *NT*

(7)   a. Žinky   byvaly   vbyty.
         woman.NOM.F.PL. was.HAB.F.PL killed.F.PL.
         '(The) women used to be killed.'   *canonical passive*
     b. *Žinok   byvalo   vbyto.
         woman.ACC.F.PL was.HAB.N.SG. killed.N.SG.
         Intended: 'Women used to get killed.'   *NT*

(8)   a. Žinky   ne buly   ne vbyty.
         woman.NOM.F.PL not was.F.PL. not killed.F.PL.
         'It wasn't the case that the women weren't killed.'   *canonical passive*
     b. *Žinok   ne bulo   ne vbyto.
         woman.ACC.F.PL not was.N.SG. not killed.N.SG.
         Intended: 'It was't the case women were killed.'   *NT*