

Accusative Impersonals and the issue of external selection

Phenomenon and new perspective Accusative impersonal sentences (AIs, cf. Szucsich 2007) in Slavic achieved considerable attention in the literature due to their apparent violation of Burzio's Generalization, which ties assignment of Acc Case to the selection of an external argument. The purpose of the paper is to test the generalization, extending the scope of the data to AIs with perception predicates, which have not been considered in the literature yet.

Types of AIs and previous accounts Ex. (1)–(6) illustrate the various types of AIs, numbered for convenience as I–V. Their common features are default agreement on the predicate, Acc Case marking on the internal argument, and no overt reflex of a canonical external argument. Previous accounts basically propose either that (a) Burzio's Generalization does not hold and AIs are licensed by defective, i.e. ϕ -incomplete T and the ϕ -complete head valuing Acc (Lavine & Freidin 2002, Harves 2006, Tsedryk 2004), or that (b) Burzio's Generalization holds and AIs are not subjectless, the external argument being projected as a null element (Szucsich 2007, 2008). The analyses deal with parts of the phenomenon only, type V has been so far neglected.

AIs with perception predicates Infinitive-like perception predicates (IPPs) are prima facie infinitives of perception verbs. They take an Acc internal argument in Ru, Ukr, Po, and Cz, cf. (5). The Acc Case cannot be lexical, since it alternates with GoN in Ru, Ukr, and Po, cf. (5b). We analyse IPPs as the result of a lexical conversion process making them [+V, +N, +Praed] items – members of a specific syntactic category, viz. predicatives. A semantic template effects replacement of the external argument by a dummy, preventing its syntactic realization (argument blocking), cf. the meaning representation in (7). This is supported by binding data: in contrast to reflexive – (8) – and *-no/-to* – (9) – impersonals, AIs with IPPs do not license subject-oriented anaphors – (10). The East Slavic languages also have adverb-like perception predicates, cf. (6). Syntactically, they behave like IPPs. Both are correlated with transitive verbs of perception.

Issues (i) Do the different types of AIs behave uniformly wrt. external selection? (ii) What is the account for the Acc in each case? This involves clarification of the argument structure of the different AIs, their relation to the corresponding transitive predicate (if any), and the role of the morphosyntactic elements employed (refl, *-n/-t-*, and *-o*).

Conclusion and proposal Only reflexive impersonals and Polish *-no/-to* have been convincingly shown to require a syntactic subject (Rivero & Milojević Sheppard 2003, Kibort 2006, Szucsich 2007). On the other hand, we show that AIs of type V license Acc without selecting an external argument, thereby violating Burzio's Generalization. We argue that these AIs preserve the Acc assigning property of the transitive verb with which they are correlated. Being [+V] is a necessary condition. Our proposal leads to a restriction of Lavine & Freidin's (2002) defective T analysis in a desirable way. We argue that types I and IV also realize Acc without external selection. While type I can be analyzed by analogy with type V, type IV requires a separate treatment. The general finding is that violations of Burzio's Generalization presuppose recourse to structures obeying it.

Types of Accusative Impersonals (AIs):

I. Adversity impersonals

- (1) Soldata ranilo pulej. (Ru)
soldier.acc wound.past.sg.n bullet.instr
'The soldier got wounded by a bullet.'

II. Reflexive impersonals

- (2) Tu buduje się szkołę. (Po)
here builds.3sg refl school.acc
'A school is being built here.'

III. -no/-to impersonals

- (3) Cerkvu bilo zbudovano Lesevym. (Ukr)
church.acc was.sg.n build.NO Lesiv.instr
'The church was built by Lesiv.'

IV. Impersonalia tantum

- (4) Mjane nudzic'. (BRu)
me.acc nauseates.3sg
'I feel nauseous.'

V. Predicatives

- (5) a. Bylo vidět Sněžku.¹ infinitive-like perception predicate (IPP) (Cz)
was.sg.n see.IPP Sněžka.acc
'Mount Sněžka could be seen./It was possible to see Mount Sněžka.'
- b. U selo šljax zvyvajet'sja, a sela samoho ne vydaty ... (IPP) (Ukr)
in village road winds.3sg.refl but village.gen itself.gen neg see.IPP
'A road winds into the village, but the village itself cannot be seen.'
- (6) Z vikna vydno dorohu. adverb-like perception predicate (APP) (Ukr)
out-of window.gen see.APP road.acc
'Through the window one can see the road.'

(7) Lexical Entry for an IPP:

[+V,+N,+Praed]; λy [POSS [e' INST [z PERCEIVE y]]]

Anaphor binding:

- (8) Nie niszczyło się swoich dokumentów. (Po, Kibort 2006:13)
neg destroy.l-part.sg.n refl refl-poss.gen documents.gen
'One did not destroy one's documents.'
- (9) Oglądano swoje zbiory. (Po, Kibort 2001:103)
look-at.NO refl-poss.acc collections.acc
'One looked at one's collections.'
- (10) *Je se vidět. (Cz, Caha & Karlík 2005:105)
is.3sg refl see.IPP
Intended meaning: 'It is possible to see oneself.'

Selected references

Lavine, J. & R. Freidin (2002): The subject of defective T(ense) in Slavic. In: *JSL* 10.1-2, 253-289.

Szucsich, L. (2007): Nothing Wrong with Finite T: Non-Agreeing Accusative Impersonal Sentences. In: Compton, R. et al. (eds.): *Formal Approaches to Slavic Linguistics: The Toronto Meeting 2006*. Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 417-435.

¹ In Cz, a Nom internal argument is an alternative option. However, this is not relevant here.