

**Agents of impersonal passives must be human.** The agents of impersonal passives are demoted arguments of unergatives. They have two curious properties: **i)** they must have a human referent (1a) and **ii)** they can't be overtly realized as a *by* phrase (1b).

- (1) a. *Es wird gepfiffen.*  
 'Whistling was done (by someone/\*something).'
- b. *\*Es wird [von den Kindern] gepfiffen.*  
 'Whistling was done by the children.'

These properties distinguish impersonal passives from their active counterparts on the one hand, and from prototypical passives on the other. In languages like German, neither actives (2a) nor prototypical passives (2b) impose a H(uman) restriction on the agent. Note also that in prototypical passives the demoted agent can be expressed as a *by* phrase (2b).

- (2) a. *Der Zug/der Bub hat gepfiffen.*  
 'The train/the boy has whistled.'
- b. *Das Fenster wurde [vom Winde] zugeschlagen.*  
 'The window was slammed shut by the wind.'

What makes the H-restriction in (1) so curious is that there is seemingly neither an external argument nor an adjunct that must comply with this restriction.

**Impersonal passives are not passive.** To understand these properties of impersonal passives we follow Abraham & Leiss 2006, and argue that they are not in fact passive: More specifically, the external argument is not suppressed, but at the same time it cannot be realized in a case-position. We hypothesize that the agent is a null argument (*arg*) which remains in SpecvP where it is licensed via selection, and that the H-restriction is crucial to argument-licensing in the absence of case.

- (3) Impersonal passive: [IP ... [vP *arg*<sub>H</sub> [vP *gepfiffen*]]]

**Humanness is an alternative to case-licensing.** We adopt Pesetsky's (2013) approach to case, according to which '*you are what you assign*'. That is, case is simply the realization of a feature of the case-assigner on both the predicate and its argument. Generalizing, we view argument-licensing as the result of feature sharing between predicates and arguments. When the feature originates in the predicate the result is argument-licensing via case. When the feature originates in the argument the result is argument-licensing via *selection*. Thus, the H-restriction is a selectable feature of arguments that functions as an argument licensing mechanism.

**The H-restriction beyond impersonal passives.** If *arg* in impersonal passives is indeed licensed by its human content, we expect to find other phenomena where human content functions as an alternative to case-licensing. Evidence that this is indeed so comes from the German impersonal pronoun *man*, which behaves like *arg*<sub>H</sub> in that it has an H-restriction (4). Furthermore observe that *man* cannot be realized either as a *by* phrase (5a) or in object position (5b). We attribute this to the fact that, like *arg*<sub>H</sub>, *man* is case-defective and is licensed via selection.

- (4) *Man pfeift.* 'One whistles.' (*one* must be human)
- (5) a. *\*Es wird [von man] gepfiffen.* 'Whistling was done by one.'
- b. *\*Er hat man pfeifen gelernt.* 'He taught one to whistle.'

Finally, we show that Blackfoot has generalized H-licensing, instead of case licensing, and that this results in an H-restriction on a variety of arguments, including subjects of transitive verbs, benefactives, goals, and themes of goal-directed motion (Bliss 2013, Kim 2014).

## References

- Abraham, Werner, and Elisabeth Leiss. 2006. Personal and impersonal passives: Definite vs. indefinite diatheses. *Transactions of the Philological Society* 104.2: 259-296.
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