Where passives and PPs meet: the case of Udmurt

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Introduction: In this talk we explore the domain of non-canonical passive constructions, i.e., constructions which have functional similarities to passives but crucially differ from those in their syntax. We zoom in on the morpho-syntax of the *-emin* construction in Udmurt (Uralic), illustrated in (1). We suggest that it is syntactically a predicative PP, such that the P takes a nominalized VP as its complement.

(1) Korka [ki̯l'em ar-i̯n pukt-**emi̯n**].
    house last year-INE build-EMIN
    'The house was built last year.'

The state of the art: Previous literature (e.g., Yemelyanov 1927, Serebrennikov 1963, Bartens 2000) agrees that diachronically, *-emin* was the concatenation of two suffixes: *-em* and the *-i̯n* inessive case suffix. The non-finite suffix *-em* occurs in two environments: *i)* past participial relative clauses (2) and *ii)* gerunds (3).

(2) [Ki̯l'em ar-i̯n pukt-**em**] korka džuaz.
    last year-INE build-EM house burn.PST.3SG
    'The house that was built last year has burned down.' (Dékány and Georgieva 2020)

(3) [[Azbar-e pi̯r-**em**-zi̯] bere] pumiśk-i-zi̯ ta todmotem murt-en.
    yard-ILL enter-EM-POSS.3PL after meet-PST-3PL this unknown person-INS
    'They met with this stranger after entering the yard.' (Alatyrev 1970)

Some recent research suggests that over time, the *-emin* sequence was reanalyzed into a new, synchronically non-decomposable derivational suffix (Asztalos 2010; F. Gulyás and Speshilova 2014; Asztalos and Szabó 2024): *-emin* is now treated as a member of the participial paradigm ('resultative participle'). At least for transitive-base verbs, (1) is taken to represent a canonical passive construction akin to the English or Russian passive (possibly under Russian influence).

***-em-i̯n* phrases are PPs, not passives:** We argue against the view that in spite of its bi-morphemic origin, *-emin* has grammaticalized into a participial suffix and is used in English-type canonical passives. Should *-em-i̯n* have been reanalyzed into a resultative participle, we would expect it to have the distribution of other participles. Participles in Udmurt occur in adnominal position as non-finite RCs (2) but never in predicative position (4). In contrast, *-em-i̯n* shows the opposite pattern: it can only be predicative and has no adnominal use (5). (Further arguments against the reanalysis come from negation and copula drop; not illustrated here for reasons of space.)

(4) *Korka [ki̯l'em ar-i̯n pukt-em].
    house last year-INE build-EM
    intended: 'The house was built last year.'

(5) *[ki̯l'em ar-i̯n pukt-emi̯n] korka
    last year-INE build-EMIN house
    intended: 'the house that was built last year'

We argue that *-em-i̯n* is still bi-morphemic and contains the inessive case suffix synchronically. In other words, the bracketed part of (1) is a predicative PP, where the inessive P *-i̯n* establishes a grammatical relationship between the subject ('house') and the complement of P, which is a nominalized VP. As a locative case, *-i̯n* contributes the meaning that we have a stable state as opposed to a change of state.

A comprehensive account of predicative *-em-i̯n* PPs (1) needs to answer two questions: *i)* what is the internal structure of the nominalized VP that is the complement of the inessive *-i̯n*; and relatedly, *ii)* which *-em* occurs in *-em-i̯n*, the participial one (2) or the gerund (3).

The status of *-em*: We adopt the analysis of Georgieva and Ótott-Kovács (2016), Georgieva (2018) and Dékány and Georgieva (2020), who argue that there is only one *-em* in Udmurt. *-em* expones a verbal functional head, which we identify as (anterior) Asp^0. The reason why both participial relatives (2) and gerunds (3) make use of *-em* is that they both contain AspP in their structure. In participial relatives we find a truncated (non-finite) VP, which is not topped off by an adjectival or nominal shell. Like finite RCs; these RCs also have a left-peripheral operator.

(6) [$_{RC}$ Op [$_{AspP}$ [$_{VP}$ ķil'em arịn pukt] Asp=em]] N=korka   structure of (2)

In gerunds the same AspP is embedded under a nominal D head, i.e., (3) is a mixed V-N extended projection. D brings in the nominal properties and hosts the possessive agreement characteristic of gerunds. Like non-derived Ns, the gerundive DP bears a structural or semantic case.

(7) [$_{PP}$ [$_{DP}$ [$_{AspP}$ [$_{VP}$ azbare pịr] Asp=em] D=-zị] P=bere]   structure of (3)

We suggest that the same *-em* that we find in participial RCs and gerunds occurs in *-em-ịn*, too.

Nominalizing the verb phrase in *-em-ịn*: Ps take nominal complements, so the projection of the lexical verb must be nominalized before it combines with the inessive P *-ịn* in (1). This can happen in two ways: via a (null) functional or a (null) lexical nominal element.
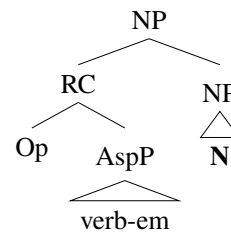
a) -em-ịn may correspond to a gerund embedded under an inessive P (i.e., a mixed extended projection in which the AspP of *-em* is the complement of and is nominalized by a null D): (8).

b) -em-ịn may correspond an NP in which a null lexical nominal head takes a participial RC modifier, with the latter including the AspP of *-em*: (9).
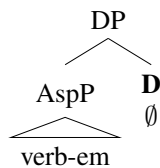
(8) gerund   (9) participial RC (with a null N)

Potential support for (9) comes from object idioms like *vales mertanị* 'to lie in bed/be lazy (lit. measure the bed)'. They retain their idiomatic reading in gerunds (10). Participial RCs and *-emịn* phrases, in contrast, only have a non-idiomatic reading, as in (11) and (12).

(10) [Pet'a-len vales   merta-m-ez]   anaj-ez-lị   jaraz.
        Petya-GEN bed.ACC measure-EM-POSS.3SG mother-POSS.3SG-DAT appeal.PST.3SG
        'Petya's measuring the bed/lying in bed appealed to his mother.'   gerund: idiomatic ✓

(11) [merta-m]   vales   (12) Vales merta-m-ịn.
        measure-EM bed   bed   measure-EM-INE
        'the measured bed'   RC: idiomatic ✗   'The bed is measured.' *-emịn*: idiomatic ✗

We take this to point to nominalization via a lexical head, i.e., a hidden relative structure for *-em-ịn*, as in (9). We propose that the null lexical noun semantically corresponds to 'state'. The overall meaning that the surface-subject is *in a target/result state* arises compositionally.

Theoretical implications: The syntax of passives, esp. the stative ones, is still the subject of debate, centred around the questions of what the internal structure of participles is and how their arguments are licensed (Kratzer 2001, Embick 2004, 2023, Bruening 2014, Paparounas 2023, a.o.). Our proposal sheds light on the cross-linguistic picture of passives: (1) may be functionally equivalent to the English or Russian passives, but it has a different syntax. It is noteworthy that different types of states are expressed by nominalized verbs plus a PP in other languages, too: cf. the Middle English locative-progressive (also present-day dialectal) progressive *a-hunt-ing*.

Selected references: Asztalos, E. 2010. Transitive and intransitive passivization in Udmurt. In: *CIFU XI.* ● F. Gulyás, N. & Speshilova, Y. 2014. Impersonals and passives in contemporary Udmurt. *FUM.*