1 Background

1.1 The debate

(1) Icelandic

a. **Canonical passive** (Thráinsson 2007:10, Ex.1.22b):

\[
\text{Skáurinn} \quad \text{var} \quad \text{opnaður}.
\]

The cupboard was opened

(“promotional passive”)

b. **New Impersonal Construction** (Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir 2002:98, Ex.2a, henceforth M&S):

\[
\text{Það} \quad \text{var} \quad \text{lamið} \quad \text{stúlkuna} \quad \text{í} \quad \text{klessa}.
\]

It[EXPL] was hit-NEUT.SG the.girl.F.SG.ACC in.a.mess

‘People badly beat the girl’

• Underlying subject is demoted, but objects remain in-situ.

• There has been a debate surrounding the true nature of these non-promotional passive constructions; that is, are these constructions:

  (a) **passives** with a thematically empty null subject? (e.g. Eythórsson 2008, Jónsson 2009)

  (b) **actives** with a phonologically null, but syntactically active thematic property? (M&S 2002, etc.)

• O’Connor and Maling (2014) and Maling and O’Connor (2015) point out that these discussions are found in other languages including Irish and Northern Pomo, a language of Northern California:

(2) a. **Irish autonomous construction** (McCloskey 2007:827, Ex.3a):

\[
\text{Cuirfear} \quad \text{é} \quad \text{sa} \quad \text{reilig} \quad \text{áitiúil}.
\]

bury.FUT.AUT him.ACC in.the.graveyard.local

‘He will be buried in the local graveyard’

• **passive**: (Stenson 1989, Noonan 1994)

• **active**: (McCloskey 2007)

b. **Northern Pomo -ya construction** (O’Connor 1992:121, Ex.62, adapted):

\[
\text{mo:wal} \quad \text{chaxa:-ya}
\]

him.ACC cut-IMP

‘(they) cut him’

• **passive**: (O’Connor 1992)

• **active**: (O’Connor and Maling 2014)

---

• M&S (2002) employ four syntactic tests to distinguish between impersonal actives (or unspecified subject constructions) and non-promotional passives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntactic Property</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Passive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agentive by-phrase</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of subject-oriented adjuncts</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binding of anaphors</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-agentive (&quot;unaccusative&quot;) verbs</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• These diagnostics show that the Polish non-promotional construction is an active, whereas the cognate construction in Ukrainian is a passive.

• This talk contributes to the discussion by bringing data from an unrelated language, namely Aleut, a highly endangered language of Alaska.

My empirical claim is that there are syntactic and semantic evidence that non-promotional constructions in Aleut are in fact actives.

2 Aleut constructions

2.1 Data

• The data are based on existing documentation collected by other fieldworkers resulting in around 184 occurrences of non-promotional constructions:

  ◦ Atkan Aleut School Grammar (Bergsland and Dirks 1981)
  ◦ Portions of the Aleut Dictionary (Bergsland 1994)
  ◦ Aleut Grammar (Bergsland 1997)
  ◦ Literature on Aleut (Berge 2010a, 2010b, 2011, to appear)
  ◦ Handouts at CoLang 2016 Aleut practicum (Berge and Dirks 2016)

2.2 Overview

• Aleut (Eskimo-Aleut) is spoken across the Aleutian (and Pribilof) islands. There are three “main” dialects: Attuan, which is presumed to no longer have any fluent speakers, Atkan, and Eastern.²

• Aleut has SOV word order and a so-called anaphoric system claimed to have developed from an ergative system (Bergsland 1997, Berge 2013):

  (3) a. Active construction (Bergsland and Dirks 1981:9):

        Asxinu-s hla-× kidu-ku-s
        girl-ABS.PL boy-ABS.SG help-IND-3PL
        ‘The girls are helping the boy.’ (Atkan)

²The Commander Island dialect, also known as Medny Aleut, is not discussed here.
b. *Anaphoric marking* (Bergsland and Dirks 1981:10):

\[
\text{Asxinu-s \ (boy-REL.PL) \ kidu-ku-u \ (help-IND-AN.3SG)}
\]

\[\text{‘The girls are helping him.’ (Atkan)}\]

- When arguments of the predicate are overt, they are *abs*, and verbal agreement occurs with the subject in person and number.
- In transitive constructions, subjects are *rel* when the non-subject is unexpressed; number agreement is with the missing argument, and person agreement is with subject and object.

- Aleut has a set of passive morphemes that demote the subject (see Table 1); this talk focuses on the general passive marker *-lga- / -sxa-*.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Removal of subject: Passives</th>
<th>passive of all sorts of verbs, including intransitive ones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>-lga- / -sxa-</em></td>
<td>passive of <em>- ĭx</em>ta-* ‘continuous state’, ‘to have as’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>-gâ-</em></td>
<td>passive of <em>-usa-</em> ‘applicative’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>-ula-</em></td>
<td>‘to be V-ed, to be in state of having V-ed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(a)ĝî-</em></td>
<td>‘to be V-ed’ (have a V-er)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>-naĝî-</em></td>
<td>‘anaphoric participial mood marker’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>-qa-</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Passivizing suffixes (Berge and Dirks 2016, adapted).  

- The passive morpheme *-lga-* exhibits behavior much like a promotional passive:

\[
(4) \quad \text{Promotional passives}
\]

a. 3PL subject (Berge and Dirks 2016):

\[
\text{Hla-s \ kidu-lga-qà-s \ (boy-ABS.PL \ help-PASS-PART-3PL)}
\]

‘The boys were helped.’ (Atkan)

b. 1SG subject (Bergsland 1997:170):

\[
\text{kidu-lga-qà-q \ (help-PASS-PART-1SG)}
\]

‘I was helped’ (Atkan)

- The agent is demoted; object promoted to subject position and agrees with the verb.

- **However, the passive morpheme does not necessarily result in object promotion** (Bergsland 1997, Berge 2013):

\[
(5) \quad \text{Non-promotional “passives”}
\]

a. 3PL object (Berge and Dirks 2016):

\[
\text{Hla-s \ kidu-lga-qà-î \ (boy-ABS.PL \ help-PASS-PART-3SG)}
\]

‘Someone helped the boys.’ / ‘We helped the boys.’ (Atkan)

---

3This phenomenon has been referred to as the *Aleut Effect* (e.g. Sadock 2000, Boyle 2000, Johns 2010, Merchant 2011).
b. **1sg object** (Bergsland 1997:170):

```plaintext
ting kidu-lga-qa-\textregistered
ting 1SG.OBJ help-PASS-PART-3SG
```

‘one helped me.’  

◊ Lack of agreement between overt argument and the verb; 3sg verbal ending observed.

◊ The unexpressed agent may refer to an impersonal third person or first person plural.

**Inherent structural ambiguity #1**: Aleut promotional passives and non-promotional constructions become ambiguous with 3sg verbal ending and overt argument marked with ABS.SG:

(6) **(Non-)promotional construction** (Berge and Dirks 2016):

```plaintext
Hla-\textregistered
talk-ABS.PL help-PASS-PART-3SG
```

‘The boy was helped’ / ‘Someone helped the boy.’ / ‘We helped the boy.’

◊ **Promotional passive**: object promoted to subject position and agrees with verb.

◊ **Non-promotional construction**: object remains in-situ; no agreement between overt argument and verb.

**Inherent structural ambiguity #2**: Aleut non-promotional constructions are ambiguous between a passive and active analysis:

(7) a. **Non-promotional passive**:

```plaintext
∅
```

b. **Unspecified subject construction (active)**:

```plaintext
proarb Hla-\textregistered
talk-ABS.PL help-PASS-PART-3SG
```

3 **Syntactic tests**

3.1 **by-phrase test**

- In Aleut, the agent may be re-introduced into promotional passive constructions via *ilaan* in Eastern Aleut or *hadagaan* in Atkan (Bergsland 1997:167):

(8) a. Amaligan Amaya [...] *guna-m ilaan ungaya-lga-qa-\textregistered*

```plaintext
there He devil-REL.SG by tempt-PASS-PART-3SG
```

‘There He was tempted by the devil [...]’ (Eastern 1870)

**The by-phrase test is inconclusive**: no occurrences of *by*-phrases found in non-promotional constructions.\(^4\)

\(^4\)Because the current study is based almost entirely on existing documentation and positive evidence alone, a large sample size and broader genre of data (e.g. narratives, conversations) are required for better reliability.
3.2 Control test

3.2.1 Subject-oriented adjuncts

- Intentional clauses are clauses of intent or purpose formed with an intentional mood marker, and may appear as adverbials (Berge, to appear).

- The subject of the intentional clause is coreferential with the subject of the main clause (Bergsland 1997):

(9) a. i. imyağ-iiğan  ayuxta-na-ñana
    fish-inten.3sg go.out-part-3sg
    ‘he went out (in his boat) in order to fish’ (Atkan 1977; Bergsland 1997:238)
   ii. [PRO imyağ-iiğan] ayuxta-na-ñana

b. i. angsuti-ingan  anqa-l  angali-q
    pick.berries-inten.1sg depart-conj do.same.day-1sg
    ‘I went out to pick berries’ (Atkan; Berge and Dirks 2016)
   ii. [PRO angsuti-ingan] anqa-l  angali-q

Proposal: The intentional clause houses an obligatory PRO that is controlled by the subject in the matrix clause.

3.2.2 Hypotheses and results

- Hypothesis #1: it’s a passive!
  Control is not possible; there is no subject in the non-promotional matrix clause because it is a true passive.

  passive: * [ ∅ [PRO V-inten.3sg ] NP V-pass-3sg ]

- Hypothesis #2 it’s an active!
  Control is possible; the non-promotional matrix clause can control into the subject-oriented adjunct because it has a pro.

  active: [ pro, [PRO, V-inten.3sg ] NP V-imp-3sg ]

- Non-promotional constructions in the main clause found with non-promotional construction in intentional clauses:

(10) a. ngaan tuman kanaẕ(t)-sx-ağan-aan  waağa-lga-ku-ñana
    dat.3sg 1pl  bow-pass-inten-3sg=encl  come-pass-ind-3sg
    ‘we came to worship (lit. bow ourselves to) Him’ (Eastern 1870; Bergsland 1997:241)
   b. pro, [PRO, ngaan tuman kanaẕ(t)sxaağanaan] waağa-lga-gaküня

(11) a. aniqdu-ñana  iqidgu-lga-ağan-aan  waağa-lga-qà-ñana
    child-ABS.sg cut-pass-inten.3sg=encl  come-pass-part-3sg
    ‘one came to circumcise the child’ (Eastern 1870; Bergsland 1997:241)
   b. pro, [PRO, aniqdux iqidgulgağanaan] waağa-lga-gaqüня
• Active construction in the main clause found with non-promotional construction in intentional clause:

(12) \textit{isu}^g\textit{i}-m \textit{ulu}-u \textit{qa}-l\textit{ga}\text{-}\textit{a}^g\text{an} \textit{isu}^g\text{na}^\text{a}^g\text{-}\textit{ii}^\text{x}\text{tan}  

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\multicolumn{2}{l}{seal-rel.sg meat-pos.3sg eat-pass-inten.3sg go.sealing-opt.1pl} \\
\end{tabular}

‘let us go sealing in order to eat seal meat’ \textit{\textit{(Eastern 1910; Bergsland 1997:240)}}

○ Person and number mismatch between main predicate and predicate in the intentional clause.\(^5\)

• Non-promotional construction in matrix clause with active intentional clause was not found.

• The control test passes: Non-promotional constructions in the main clause with subject-oriented adjuncts (i.e. intentional clauses) permissible.

3.3 Binding test

• Aleut has a large set of reflexive verbs:

(13) a. \textit{txin aygaxti-} ‘to walk off’ (Bergsland 1997:101): 
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{txin} & \textit{aygaxti-ku-\^x}  \\
\textit{refl.3sg} & \textit{walk.off-ind-3sg} \\
\end{tabular}

‘he forced me to do it’

b. \textit{txin uqla^x-} ‘to wash, bathe’ (Bergsland 1994:449): 
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{aaliisi-m ilaan ting uqla\^g-na-qing}  \\
\textit{harbor-rel.sg abl.3sg refl.1sg wash-part.1sg} \\
\end{tabular}

‘I washed myself in the harbor’ \textit{\textit{(Eastern 1983)}}

• Importantly, there are no non-reflexive third person pronouns in the language (Leer 1991, Bergsland 1997). The following example can only have a reflexive meaning:

(14) \textit{achixa-} ‘to teach’ (Bergsland 1997:139):
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{txin} & \textit{achixa-ku-\^x}  \\
\textit{refl.3sg teach-ind-3sg} \\
\end{tabular}

‘he/she is teaching himself/herself’ \textit{\textit{(Atkan)}}

• To indicate a non-reflexive third person, anaphoric marking is used.

• Cross-linguistically, reflexive verbs do not passivize (Schäfer 2012), and reflexive verbs behave syntactically like intransitive verbs: “[a] reflexive verb [in Aleut] behaves much like an intransitive one” (Bergsland 1997:156).

• In Aleut, non-promotional constructions with reflexive verbs display variation in terms of their syntactic behaviors:
  ○ In an impersonal reading, reflexive pronouns are lost.
  ○ In a ‘we’ reading, reflexive pronouns are retained.

\(^5\)See also example (16b).
• **Impersonal reading:**

(15) *Naturally reflexive verb – txin haağani- ‘to stop’*


\[
\begin{align*}
\text{txidix} & \quad \text{haağani-ku-s} \\
\text{REFL.3PL} & \quad \text{stop-IND-3PL}
\end{align*}
\]

‘they stopped’  

(Atkan 1952)


\[
\begin{align*}
il(-\text{an}) & \quad \text{chugi-lga-lakan} \quad \text{haağani-lga-ku-ˆx} \\
\text{inside(-LOC.3SG) not.silent-PASS-CONJ.NEG stop-PASS-IND-3SG}
\end{align*}
\]

‘when they were (lit. one was) silent in there and stopped’  

(Atkan 1909)

• **‘We’ reading:**

(16) a. *Active constructions:*

i. *Inherently reflexive verb* (Bergsland 1997:173):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ngaan} & \quad \text{txin} \quad \text{iq(y)ağıti-ku-u} \\
\text{DAT.3SG REFL.3SG paddle-IND-AN.3SG}
\end{align*}
\]

‘he paddles to it’  

(Eastern 1910)


\[
\begin{align*}
ilaan & \quad \text{txin} \quad \text{ukudigati-ku-u} \\
\text{ABL.3SG REFL.3SG become.safe-IND-AN.3SG}
\end{align*}
\]

‘he gets safely away from it’  

(Eastern 1910)


\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ngaan} & \quad \text{tuman} \quad \text{iqağı-sxa-lix} \\
\text{DAT.3SG REFL.1PL paddle-PASS-CONJ}
\end{align*}
\]

‘we paddle to it ... get safely from it’  

(Eastern 1910)

• **Proposal:** Like in Irish, Aleut reflexive pronouns require an antecedent with matching person and number features.

  ◦ Impersonal reading: lacks necessary number and/or person features to bind onto reflexives.
  ◦ Personal ‘we’ reading: has necessary number and person features to bind onto reflexives.

• **The binding test passes:** binding of anaphors is possible; variation in syntactic behavior between the impersonal/personal readings explained by the availability of features on the null subject.

### 3.4 Unaccusative test

• In general, unaccusative verbs do not passivize (Perlmutter 1978).

• According to Bergsland, passives may appear on “all sorts of verbs including intransitive ones”.

• Citing Golovko (2007), Kiparsky (2013) says, “Aleut reportedly allows both impersonal or personal passives of all intransitives and transitives.”
• Canonical unaccusative verbs (e.g. ‘die’, ‘arrive’) are found with passive morphemes in Aleut:

(17) Unaccusative verbs with the passive marker:
  a. as蛤- ‘to die’ (Bergsland 1997:295, adapted):
     [...] as蛤-lga-qa-gan
die-PASS-PART-INTEN.3SG
     ‘...people had (previously) died’ (Eastern 1909)
  b. a蛤- ‘to arrive’ (Bergsland 1997:168, adapted):
     [...] ilan a蛤-lga-aka-qa-ˆg-ulux
     inside arrive-PASS-ABLE.PART-3SG=NEG
     ‘...one could not get [to]’ (Eastern 1909)

• The unaccusative test passes: unaccusative verbs may undergo passivization.

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<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Conclusion

• I argued that the Aleut non-promotional construction is an active construction and not a passive as has been traditionally described.
  ◦ Subjects in non-promotional constructions in Aleut may control into intentional clauses which I analyze as subject-oriented adjuncts.
  ◦ Reflexive pronouns in Aleut require an antecedent with matching person and number features, explaining variation in syntactic behavior between the indefinite and definite reading of non-promotional constructions with reflexive verbs.
  ◦ Morphology is an unreliable indicator of voice (Maling and O’Connor 2014).

• Preliminary research on the language based on existing documentation reveals areas of the grammar that require more attention to help guide future documentation efforts.

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