

## The elephant in the room: the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction in Polish

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### Abstract

This chapter offers an overview of the little studied Polish impersonal construction which is made up of an auxiliary or copular verb in 3SG.N and a passive or resultative *-n-/-t-* participle bearing the singular neuter inflection *-e*. I describe the morphological form and syntactic behaviour of this construction, demonstrate that it is not only functionally impersonal but also syntactically subjectless, and discuss its relation to the impersonal passive of the intransitive as well as to the impersonal predicative adverbial construction. I conclude that the form of the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction is underspecified with regard to which of the two syntactic constructions (passive verbal or non-passive adverbial) it instantiates. Hence, syntactic frameworks need to provide an appropriate model for this type of underspecification.

**Key words:** Polish, impersonal, resultative participle, passive of intransitive, predicative adverbial construction

### 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Polish has a wide range of impersonal constructions identified on the basis of their lack of a referential subject. The aim of this chapter is to give an overview of one that has been surprisingly little studied: the impersonal construction which uses the past/passive *-n-/-t-* participle bearing the singular neuter inflection *-e*. The construction is exemplified in (1) and (2), under the assumption that no neuter singular referent can be found in the context of these sentences which could be interpreted as the antecedent of their ‘dropped’ subject:

- (1) a. *Było codziennie sprzątane.*  
was.3SG.N every-day tidy.PART.SG.N  
‘[It] has been cleaned every day. / There has been cleaning every day.’
- b. *W pokoju było codziennie sprzątane.*  
in room(M).LOC was.3SG.N every-day tidy.PART.SG.N  
‘[It] has been cleaned every day in the room. / There has been cleaning in the room every day.’
- (2) a. *Było ładnie posprzątane.*  
was.3SG.N nicely tidy-up.PART.SG.N  
‘[It] was nicely cleaned/tidied up.’
- b. *W pokoju było ładnie posprzątane.*  
in room(M).LOC was.3SG.N nicely tidy-up.PART.SG.N

‘[It] was nicely cleaned/tidied up in the room.’

Sentences in (1) and (2) lack an overt subject – either lexical or a ‘dummy’ expletive one, since Polish does not have expletives. The SG.N inflection of the predicate is recognizable as a morphological strategy for situations when subject-predicate agreement breaks down either due to the lack of a subject or due to inadequate morphosyntactic properties of the subject. In Polish, as in many other languages, breakdown of subject-predicate agreement leads to the use of the (3)SG.N marking as the ‘exceptional case default’ inflection on the verb.<sup>2</sup> Importantly, as I show in section 5, the location participant in (1b) and (2b) cannot be regarded a subject. Therefore, all four sentences in (1) and (2) are truly subjectless, in addition to being functionally impersonal by virtue of their non-elaboration of the causal participant of the event (Siewierska 2008: 121).

The impersonal *-ne/-te* construction poses an interesting problem of analysis, as it is not clear whether it is passive or non-passive. It can be argued to be an instance of the impersonal passive of the intransitive, since we can establish the following active-passive alternation:

- (3) a. *Firma codziennie sprzątała w pokojach.*  
company(F).NOM every-day tidied.3SG.F in rooms  
‘The (professional) company did the cleaning in the rooms every day.’
- b. *W pokojach było codziennie sprzątane (przez firmę).*  
in rooms was.3SG.N every-day tidy.PART.SG.N (by company)  
‘[It] was cleaned every day in the rooms (by the company). / There was cleaning in the rooms every day (by the company).’
- (4) a. *Piotr ładnie posprzątał w pokoju.*  
Peter(M).NOM nicely tidied-up.3SG.M in room  
‘Peter tidied up/cleaned nicely in the room.’
- b. *W pokoju było ładnie posprzątane (przez Piotra).*  
in room was.3SG.N nicely tidy-up.PART.SG.N (by Peter)  
‘[It] was nicely cleaned/tidied up (by Peter) in the room.’

On this analysis, the *-ne/-te* participle in (3b) and (4b) performs a predicative function: it is the main verb of the passive predicate, accompanied by an auxiliary ‘be’.

On the other hand, the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction can be argued to be an instance of a predicative adverbial construction, a typical example of which is given below in (5a). This analysis seems particularly appropriate for sentences such as those in (2), since we observe the following analogy:

- (5) a. *W pokoju było czysto.*  
in room was.3SG.N cleanly  
‘[It] was clean in the room.’
- b. *W pokoju było posprzątane.*  
in room was.3SG.N tidy-up.PART.SG.N  
‘[It] was cleaned/tidied up in the room.’
- c. *W pokoju było czysto i posprzątane.*  
in room was.3SG.N clean and tidy-up.PART.SG.N  
‘[It] was clean and tidied up in the room.’

On this analysis, the *-ne/-te* participle in (5b-c) also performs a predicative function; however, it is not the main verb but a predicate adverb, accompanied by a copula ‘be’ functioning as the main verb.

While all the above examples with the *-ne/-te* participle can be considered instances of the so-called ‘objective resultative’, examples (6) and (7) illustrate the analogous use of the *-ne/-te* participle in the ‘possessive resultative’:

- (6) a. *Miał codziennie sprzątane.*  
had.3SG.M every-day tidy.PART.SG.N  
‘He had the cleaning done every day.’
- b. *Miał codziennie sprzątane w pokoju.*  
had.3SG.M every-day tidy.PART.SG.N in room(M).LOC  
‘He had the cleaning done in his room every day.’
- (7) a. *Miał ładnie posprzątane.*  
had.3SG.M nicely tidy-up.PART.SG.N  
‘He had [it] nicely cleaned/tidied up.’
- b. *Miał ładnie posprzątane w pokoju.*  
had.3SG.M nicely tidy-up.PART.SG.N in room(M).LOC  
‘He had it nicely cleaned/tidied up in his room.’

In (6) and (7) the *-ne/-te* participle is part of a secondary predicate which in turn is part of the clausal object of a personal verb (‘have’). The *-ne/-te* participle in these sentences shows default non-agreement inflection (SG.N), because the clausal complement of which it is a part has no head – that is, the small clause has no subject.

Regardless of whether the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction is analysed as passive verbal or non-passive adverbial, it is clear that in both cases the syntax makes use of one and the same *-n/-t-* participial form. It is the same form which is also commonly found in *personal* sentences such as (8a-b), in which the *-ne/-te* participle shows agreement with the subject noun phrase:

- (8) a. *Pomieszczenie było codziennie sprzątane.*  
chamber(N).NOM was.3SG.N every-day tidy.PART.SG.N.NOM  
‘The room was cleaned every day.’
- b. *Pomieszczenie było ładnie posprzątane.*  
chamber(N).NOM was.3SG.N nicely tidy-up.PART.SG.N.NOM  
‘The room was nicely cleaned/tidied up.’

Like (1) and (2), sentences in (8a-b) pose a similar analytical problem with regard to their status as passive or non-passive. Thus, in (8a-b) the *-ne/-te* participle can be analysed either as the main verb of a complex passive predicate, or as the predicative complement of the subject, and it matches the subject noun’s gender (here: neuter), number (here: singular), and case (here: nominative).<sup>3</sup> If the subject has different inflectional properties, the participle matches them accordingly, as in the following examples with a feminine singular subject:

- (9) a. *Sala była codziennie sprzątana.*  
hall/ward(F).NOM was.3SG.F every-day tidy.PART.SG.F.NOM  
‘The hall/ward was cleaned every day.’
- b. *Sala była ładnie posprzątana.*  
hall/ward(F).NOM was.3SG.F nicely tidy-up.PART.SG.F.NOM  
‘The hall/ward was nicely cleaned/tidied up.’

Furthermore, while (8) and (9) are personal varieties of the ‘objective resultative’, examples (10) and (11) illustrate personal varieties of the ‘possessive resultative’:

- (10) a. *Miał to pomieszczenie codziennie sprzątane.*  
had.3SG.M this.N.ACC chamber(N).ACC every-day tidy.PART.SG.N.ACC  
‘He had the room cleaned every day.’
- b. *Miał to pomieszczenie ładnie posprzątane.*  
had.3SG.M this.N.ACC chamber(N).ACC nicely tidy-up.PART.SG.N.ACC  
‘He had the room nicely cleaned/tidied up.’
- (11) a. *Mam już wszystkie egzaminy*  
have.1SG already all.NONMHUM.ACC exams(NONMHUM).ACC  
*pozdawane.*  
take.PART.PL.NONMHUM.ACC  
‘I already have all the exams taken.’ (meaning ‘I’ve already taken all of the exams’) (Rothstein 1993: 715)<sup>4</sup>
- b. *Miała już projekt prawie wykończony.*  
had.3SG.F already design(M).ACC almost finish.PART.SG.M.ACC  
‘She already had the design almost finished.’ (meaning ‘She’d almost finished the design’)

As in (8), in (10)-(11) the *-n-/-t-* participle is an agreeing element: its inflection matches that of its head noun which is also the subject of the small clause. The main verb of the matrix clause does not have to be ‘have’ – there are many more verbs that would accept a small clause of this type as an object (not only ‘get’, but also ‘see’, ‘give’, ‘seem’, etc.).

In (8)-(11) I have shown personal uses of the *-n-/-t-* participle analogous to the impersonal uses of this participle – that is, they were all predicative uses. However, personal (but not impersonal) constructions additionally have a common variant where the *-n-/-t-* participle can be used *attributively*, as in the following examples; compare (12a-b) with (8a-b):

- (12) a. *codziennie sprzątane pomieszczenie*  
every-day tidy.PART.SG.N.NOM chamber(N).NOM  
‘a/the daily-cleaned room’
- b. *ładnie posprzątane pomieszczenie*  
nicely tidy-up.PART.SG.N.NOM chamber(N).NOM  
‘a/the nicely cleaned/tidied up room’
- c. *złamana noga*  
break.PART.SG.F.NOM leg(F).NOM  
‘a/the broken leg’
- d. *zgubione banknoty*  
lose.PART.PL.NONMHUM.NOM banknotes(NONMHUM).NOM  
‘(the) lost banknotes’

These noun phrases with the *-n-/-t-* participle used attributively also commonly occur in the ‘possessive resultative’, as in the following examples:

- (13) b. *Wojtek ma złamaną nogę.*  
Wojtek(M).NOM has break.PART.SG.F.ACC leg(F).ACC

‘Wojtek has a broken leg.’ (meaning ‘Wojtek has broken his leg’)  
(Lempp 1986: 126)

- c. *Mam zgubione banknoty.*  
have.1SG lose.PART.PL.NONMHUM.ACC banknotes(NONMHUM).ACC  
‘I’ve got some banknotes lost.’ (meaning ‘I have lost some banknotes’)  
(Lempp 1986: 126)

In the sections below I first discuss the extent of the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction in Polish, then the morphology of the *-ne/-te* participle and the syntax of the impersonal construction in which it can be found. In particular, I clarify the overlap of the *-ne/-te* impersonal construction with the impersonal passive of the intransitive and with the predicative adverbial construction. I also briefly discuss the status of the locative argument in this construction, arguing that it cannot be considered its subject. Apart from providing illustrative constructed examples, I cite a large number of examples from naturally occurring written and spoken discourse extracted from the web and from two large corpora of Polish language: the IPI PAN Corpus (of over 250 million segments) developed by the Linguistic Engineering Group at the Institute of Computer Science, Polish Academy of Sciences, and the PELCRA Reference Corpus of Polish (of around 93 million words) developed by the Department of English at the University of Łódź, Poland. Both corpora are available for searching online.

## 2. The extent of the *-ne/-te* construction in Polish

Searches for the *-ne/-te* participle in Polish corpora and on the web bring up many impersonal uses of the *-ne/-te* participle formed from semantically transitive predicates implying an external, mostly human, agent. The following is a range of verbs that can be found in the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction, matched with their *-ne/-te* participles showing various aspects, prefixes, and sometimes negative polarity. Both lists, of verbs and of their participles, are representative though certainly not exhaustive:

|  |   |                                     |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| (14) <i>dzwonić</i> ‘ring/telephone.INF’ | → | <i>dzwonione</i>                    |
| <i>gotować</i> ‘cook.INF’                | → | <i>ugotowane</i>                    |
| <i>kończyć</i> ‘finish.INF’              | → | <i>dokończone</i>                   |
|  |   | <i>niedokończone</i> (‘unfinished’) |
|  |   | <i>skończone</i>                    |
| <i>mówić</i> ‘say/tell.INF’              | → | <i>mówione</i>                      |
| <i>myśleć</i> ‘think.INF’                | → | <i>pomyślane</i>                    |
|  |   | <i>wymyślane</i>                    |
| <i>otworzyć</i> ‘open.INF’               | → | <i>otwarte</i>                      |
| <i>piec</i> ‘bake.INF’                   | → | <i>upieczone</i>                    |
| <i>pisać</i> ‘write.INF’                 | → | <i>napisane</i>                     |
|  |   | <i>wypisane</i>                     |
| <i>planować</i> ‘plan.INF’               | → | <i>planowane</i>                    |
|  |   | <i>zaplanowane</i>                  |
| <i>placić</i> ‘pay.INF’                  | → | <i>płacone</i>                      |
|  |   | <i>zapłacone</i>                    |
| <i>potrącić</i> ‘deduct.INF’             | → | <i>potrącone</i>                    |
| <i>powiedzieć</i> ‘say.INF’              | → | <i>powiedziane</i>                  |

|                                |   |   |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| <i>powtarzać</i> ‘repeat.INF’  | → | <i>powtarzane</i>   |
| <i>prać</i> ‘launder.INF’      | → | <i>uprane</i><br><i>wyprane</i><br><i>poprane</i>                                 |
| <i>prasować</i> ‘iron.INF’     | → | <i>poprasowane</i><br><i>wyprasowane</i>  |
| <i>przedłużyć</i> ‘extend.INF’ | → | <i>przedłużane</i>  |
| <i>rysować</i> ‘scratch.INF’   | → | <i>porysowane</i>   |
| <i>sprawdzać</i> ‘check.INF’   | → | <i>sprawdzane</i>   |
| <i>sprzątać</i> ‘tidy.INF’     | → | <i>sprzątane</i><br><i>posprzątane</i><br><i>nieposprzątane</i> (‘not tidied up’) |
| <i>ścierać</i> ‘wipe.INF’      | → | <i>pościerane</i>   |
| <i>włączać</i> ‘switch-on.INF’ | → | <i>włączane</i>   |
| <i>wytrzeć</i> ‘wipe.INF’      | → | <i>wytarte</i><br><i>wycierane</i>  |
| <i>zabronić</i> ‘forbid.INF’   | → | <i>zabronione</i>   |
| <i>zająć</i> ‘occupy.INF’      | → | <i>zajęte</i><br><i>pozajmowane</i>   |
| <i>zamknąć</i> ‘close.INF’     | → | <i>zamknięte</i><br><i>pozamykane</i>   |
| <i>zmyć</i> ‘wash-up.INF’      | → | <i>zmyte</i><br><i>pozmywane</i>  |

The impersonal *-ne/-te* construction is commonly associated with verbs denoting household activities such as *sprzątać* ‘tidy’, *gotować* ‘cook’, *piec* ‘bake’, *prać* ‘launder’, *prasować* ‘iron’, *ścierać* ‘wipe’, *wytrzeć* ‘wipe’, *zmyć* ‘wash-up’, etc. Examples abound, and the following is a small selection from the Polish corpora and texts found on the web. Note that example (15d) contains a headless *-ne/-te* participle formed from the verb *złożyć* ‘fold’, which can be taken as evidence that the construction is indeed productive:

- (15) a. *A moja mama mi zawsze na to: “a ja z czworgiem dzieci magisterkę pisałam i zawsze było **posprzątane**, obiad z dwóch dań i **upieczone, pozmywane** – a zmywarek nie było”.*  
and my mother me always to this and I with four children master’s-thesis wrote and always was cleaned dinner of two courses and baked washed-up and dishwashers not were  
‘And my mother always replies to me: “and I was writing my master’s thesis with four children and [it] was always cleaned, dinner of two courses, and [it was] baked, washed up – and there were no dishwashers”.’
- b. *Nie było **ugotowane, posprzątane**, a dziecko 3 godziny siedziało w huśtawce bo nie miał jej kto z niej wyciągnąć.*  
not was cooked cleaned and child three hours sat in swing because not was her who from it take-out  
‘[It] wasn’t cooked, cleaned, and the child had been sitting in a swing for three hours because there was no one to take her out of it.’
- c. *Wtedy zobaczyłam swoje życie jako bieżanina za obowiązkami, aby*  
then saw my life as running after duties so-that

*było czysto, aby było poprasowane i poprane... tylko, po co?*  
 was clean so-that was ironed and laundered only for what  
 ‘Then I saw my life as a race against duties, making sure [it] was clean,  
 ironed and laundered... but what for?’

- d. *Lista życzeń: 15. Deska do prasowania – najlepiej taka, żeby*  
 list of-wishes 15. board for ironing best such that  
*wystarczyło położyć i żeby już było wyprasowane.*  
 be-enough lay and that already was ironed  
 ‘A wish list: 15. An ironing board – the best one would be such that it  
 would be enough to put [the ironing on it] and [it] would already be  
 ironed.’
- e. *Ma obowiązek szeroko pojętego dbania o dom, czyli żeby było*  
 has duty broadly understood looking after home that-is that be  
*ugotowane, uprane i złożone w kosteczkę.*  
 cooked laundered and folded into cube  
 ‘[He/She] has the duty of a broadly understood care for the household,  
 that is, [to make sure] that [it] would be cooked, laundered and folded  
 into a cube.’
- f. *Jeszcze nie pościerane?! (...) szybciej!*  
 yet not wiped more-quickly  
 ‘[It] has not yet [been] wiped?! (...) hurry up!’
- g. *W trzy sekundy było zmyte, wytarte, i myk myk po pokojach...*  
 in three seconds was washed-up wiped and hop hop round rooms  
 ‘In three seconds [it] was washed-up, dried, and [they went quickly]  
 round the rooms.’

In all these and similar examples, verbs denoting household activities are used intransitively, and their objects are understood (or, generic). It would not be surprising to find that a corresponding class of verbs behaves in a similar way in other languages, both in the active – dropping the understood object, and in the impersonal – dropping the understood subject or head noun (as in the examples above). An example is Hungarian, where a large class of verbs with a similar denotation to the Polish ones just discussed can be used both transitively and intransitively: *kitakarít* ‘clean up’, *kimos* ‘wash’, *kivasal* ‘iron’, *elmosogat* ‘do the washing’, *bepakol* ‘pack’, *tálal* ‘serve (food)’, *felmos* ‘wash the floor’, *befűt* ‘heat up’, *kiszellőztet* ‘air’, *bevásárol* ‘shop’, etc., both in the active and in the passive or resultative impersonal (Tóth 2000: 251-252). The following example, from Tóth (2000: 252, ex. 24), compares the personal variant of the sentence with the resultative participle in *-va* with the subjectless variant (where the location argument is not a subject, but an optional oblique):

- (16) a. *A szobák ki vannak takarít-va.*  
 the rooms-NOM PV<sub>out</sub><sup>5</sup> are clean-VA  
 ‘The rooms are cleaned.’
- b. *(A szobák-ban) ki van takarít-va.*  
 the rooms-INE PV<sub>out</sub> is clean-VA  
 ‘It is cleaned (in the rooms).’

The impersonal *-ne/-te* construction in Polish may also include an optional location argument which is not a subject (see section 5). A location argument such as

w domu ‘at home’ or another appropriate one could easily be added to most impersonal *-ne/-te* sentences with participles denoting household activities. Other impersonal *-ne/-te* sentences can be formed with an oblique location argument (or adjunct) *wszędzie* ‘everywhere’, or with other appropriate expressions of location:

- (17) a. *Wszędzie było ładnie udekorowane.*  
 everywhere was.3SG.N nicely decorate.PART.SG.N  
 ‘Everywhere was nicely decorated.’
- b. *Wszędzie było dobrze oznakowane.*  
 everywhere was.3SG.N well signpost.PART.SG.N  
 ‘Everywhere was well signposted.’
- c. *Wszędzie było strzeżone.*  
 everywhere was.3SG.N guard.PART.SG.N  
 ‘Everywhere was guarded.’
- d. *Wszędzie było zajęte/pozajmowane.*  
 everywhere was.3SG.N occupy.PART.SG.N  
 ‘Everywhere was occupied.’ (about parking spaces, toilets, etc.)
- e. *Wiem, że wczoraj podłoga była mokra na dolnej kondygnacji,  
 know that yesterday floor was wet on bottom floor  
 ale na wyższych nie było zmyte.  
 but on higher-ones not was washed  
 ‘I know that yesterday the floor was wet on the lower floor, but on the  
 higher ones [it] had not been washed.’*
- f. *Patrzę, że na rurze sterowej jest dookoła porysowane (taka jedna  
 look that on tube steering is around scratched this one  
 linia), zaglądam do główki ramy i w tym samym miejscu jest też  
 line peep into head frame and in this same place is also  
 porysowane ale nie dookoła tylko taki półkrąg. Ale w miejscu  
 scratched but not around only this half-circle but in place  
 gdzie na amorce było porysowane to nic nie było.  
 where on fork was scratched then nothing not was  
 ‘I see that on the steering tube [it] is scratched [all] around (just one  
 line). I peep into the head of the frame and in the same place [it] is also  
 scratched but not around, just a half-circle. However, in the place where  
 [it] was scratched on the fork – there was nothing.’ (about bike  
 maintenance)*
- g. *Akurat tak było, że w jednym pomieszczeniu to były deski, a  
 just so was that in one room that was boards and  
 w drugim było nie wykończone, to glina była.  
 in second was not finished that clay was  
 ‘It was just like that, in one room there were boards, and in the other [it]  
 was not finished, there was clay.’*
- h. *Dredy się doczepia w ten sposób najlepiej, że się rozwala  
 dreads REFL attach in this way best that REFL break-up  
 końcówkę i się je doszydelkowuje i nawet nie widać w którym  
 ending and REFL them crochet-hook and even not see in which  
 miejscu było przedłużane.  
 place was extended*

‘Dreads are best attached in this way that [you] break up the ending and [you] crochet-hook them and [then you] can’t even see in which place [it] was extended.’

The following sentences exemplify common uses of the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction formed from other verbs which were given in the list in (14):

- (18) a. *Nie pozostaje ci nic innego jak wziąć biling do ręki i sprawdzić kiedy było dzwonione, o której godzinie, i zobaczyć kto wtedy był w domu itp.*  
 not remains you nothing else than take bill into hand and check when was phoned at which hour and see who then was at home etc.  
 ‘Nothing else remains for you [to do] but to take the bill in your hand, check when [it] was called, at what time, and check who was at home at that time, etc.’
- b. *Już skończone – odezwała się spokojnie, próbując doprowadzić mój ubiór do ładu.*  
 already finished pronounced REFL calmly trying bring my garment to order  
 ‘[It’s] already finished – she said calmly, trying to get my garment in order.’
- c. *jeszcze jest niedokończone. wiesz. jeszcze niedokończone. bo nie ma wiesz. dywanik. zasłonki. tylko splukani jesteśmy zupełnie.*  
 still is unfinished you-know still unfinished because not has you-know carpet curtains only flat-broke we-are completely  
 ‘[It] is still unfinished, you know, still unfinished, because there isn’t, you know, a carpet, curtains, but we are completely broke.’
- d. *Jeśli ktoś miał niezależnie pobrane świadczenia ale było potrącone z bieżących świadczeń to też wpisuje to w pierwszy wiersz.*  
 if one had independently taken benefits but was deducted from current benefits then also fills this in first row  
 ‘If one had taken their benefits independently but [it] was deducted from their current benefits, then they also fill this in the first row.’ (about filling out a tax form)
- e. *Samemu można zrezygnować (aby nie było przedłużane) w okienku płatności.*  
 oneself can opt-out so-that not was extended at desk cash  
 ‘One can opt out oneself (so that [it] is not extended) at the cash desk.’ (about licence fees)
- f. *No i co z tego, że było otwarte? Czy zamknięcie sklepu to jakiś hold?*  
 now and what of this that was open(ed) INTERR closing shop this-is some homage  
 ‘And so what that [it] was open? Does the closing of a shop [constitute] some homage?’
- g. *A płacone było nieźle, bo pośpiech był.*  
 and paid was not-badly because urgency was

‘And [it] was paid rather well, because there was urgency.’

- h. *Zatem – finis. Skończone z Bellonem i skończone ze wszystkimi.*  
thus ‘finis’ finished with Bellon and finished with everyone  
*Żegnam panów.*  
bid-farewell gentlemen  
‘That’s it, then – the end. [It’s] finished with Bellon and finished with everyone. I bid you farewell, gentlemen.’
- i. *Nie, nie, w biosie było sprawdzane i włączane.*  
no no in bios was checked and switched-on  
‘No, no, in bios [it] was checked and enabled.’
- j. *Mówię mu że jest zajęte, a on na to: “zamknij mordę”.*  
tell him that is occupied and he on this shut gob  
‘I tell him that [it] is taken, and he [replies] to this: “shut your trap”.’
- k. *Byłem tam w poniedziałek i było zamknięte.*  
was there on Monday and was closed  
‘I was there on Monday and [it] was closed.’
- l. *Poprzez swą ogólnodostępność kusi tych co prawdopodobnie by nie spróbowali gdyby było zabronione.*  
would not tried if was forbidden  
‘Through its general accessibility [it] tempts those who would probably not try [it/them] if [it] was forbidden.’ (about drugs including ecstasy)

Many of the *-ne/-te* participles listed in (14) can be followed by the complementiser *że* ‘that’ and a finite clause, as in (19a). In those cases, I treat the clausal complement as the grammatical subject of the sentence with the participial predicate. Clausal subjects do not have the inflectional properties of controllers of agreement and are therefore non-canonical. Sentences with the *-ne/-te* participle may also have other non-canonical subjects which lack the inflectional properties of controllers of agreement, as in (19b). Examples such as (19a-b) therefore qualify as impersonal, but not as subjectless (in contrast with the impersonal and subjectless clauses in (15), (17), and (18)):

- (19) a. *Jest napisane, że biuro jest czynne.*  
is written that office is active(=open)  
‘[It] is written that the office is open.’
- b. *Było napisane “20”.*  
was written “20”  
‘[It] was written “20”.’

However, some of those participles may equally easily occur without such subjects, but instead with adverbial elements: either the particle-adverb *jak* ‘as’ which relates its clause to another clause, as illustrated in (20), or complex adverbial complements which themselves involve finite clauses, as illustrated in (21).

- (20) *Jak już było/zostało powiedziane, ... .*  
as already was/became said  
‘As [it] was already said, ....’

Other *-ne/-te* participles which can be found in this pattern include: *odnotowane* ‘noted’, *podkreślone* ‘emphasised’, *przypomniane* ‘reminded’, *skomentowane* ‘commented on’, *wspomniane* ‘mentioned’, *wyeksponowane* ‘highlighted’, *zasugerowane* ‘suggested’, *zauważone* ‘noticed’, and so on.

- (21) *Tak było/zostało powiedziane, że wyszło, że przeplaciliśmy.*  
 so was/became said that turned-out that overpaid  
 ‘[It] was said in such a way that it turned out that we overpaid.’

And again, other *-ne/-te* participles which can be found in this pattern include: *eksponowane* ‘highlighted’, *napisane/wypisane* ‘written’, *obliczane/obliczone* ‘calculated’, *planowane* ‘planned’, *placone* ‘paid’, *pomyślane/przemyślane* ‘thought through’, *potrącane* ‘deducted’, *powtarzane* ‘repeated’, *przedłużane* ‘extended’, *sprawdzone/sprawdzane* ‘checked’, *szacowane* ‘estimated’, *ustalane/ustalone* ‘arranged’, *uzgadniane/uzgodnione* ‘agreed’, *uwzględniane/uwzględnione* ‘considered’, *wymyślone* ‘conceived’, *zaplanowane* ‘planned’, and so on.

Many of the *-ne/-te* participles listed above are found in the ‘possessive resultative’ construction which I first illustrated in examples (6) and (7), repeated here as (22) and (23):

- (22) a. *Miał codziennie sprzątane.*  
 had.3SG.M every-day tidy.PART.SG.N  
 ‘He had the cleaning done every day.’
- b. *Miał codziennie sprzątane w pokoju.*  
 had.3SG.M every-day tidy.PART.SG.N in room(M).LOC  
 ‘He had the cleaning done in his room every day.’
- (23) a. *Miał ładnie posprzątane.*  
 had.3SG.M nicely tidy-up.PART.SG.N  
 ‘He had [it] nicely cleaned/tidied up.’
- b. *Miał ładnie posprzątane w pokoju.*  
 had.3SG.M nicely tidy-up.PART.SG.N in room(M).LOC  
 ‘He had it nicely cleaned/tidied up in his room.’

In these sentences, the clausal complement of which the *-ne/-te* participle is a part has no head – that is, if we analyse the clausal complement as a small clause, it has no subject. Examples of this variant of the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction are also numerous both in Polish corpora and on the web, and here is a small handful of examples:

- (24) a. *Szpitala mają płacone od pacjenta.*  
 hospitals have paid from patient  
 ‘Hospitals have [it] paid per patient.’ (meaning ‘Hospitals are paid per patient’)
- b. *Ja mam tak wypisane na ulotce.*  
 I have so written on leaflet  
 ‘I have [it] written in this way on the leaflet.’
- c. *A w święta majowe będziesz miał otwarte?*  
 and in holiday May you-will have open  
 ‘And during May holiday are you going to have [it] open(ed)?’
- d. *W głowie miał zawsze przewrócone.*

in head had always tumbled  
 ‘He always had [it] tumbled in the head.’ (meaning ‘He was a bit of a nutcase’)

The last example, (24d), which is close to being an idiom (although it does have an active personal variant), brings me finally to a small but open and productive semantic class of verbs which do not seem to be used as main verbs in transitive personal clauses, but are found only as *-ne/-te* participles with the prefix *prze-* (roughly) ‘through’ in the impersonal construction with ‘have’, and only in the colloquial language:

- (25) *Piotr ma przechlapane/przerąbane/prześwistane.*  
 Peter has splashed/hacked/whistled  
 ‘Peter has [it] splashed/hacked/whistled.’ (meaning: ‘Peter is in trouble’)

### 3. The morphology of the *-ne/-te* construction

In the following subsections I discuss the key properties and the status of the elements making up the complex verb of the *-ne/-te* construction: the *-n/-t-* participle, and the finite verb.

#### 3.1. The *-n/-t-* participle: form and meaning

The *-n/-t-*<sup>6</sup> participle underlies a set of forms which make up an inflectional paradigm identical to that of the adjective (see e.g. Laskowski 1998a: 268-269). For example, the number and gender forms of the participle *sprzątan-* ‘tidy.PART’ in the nominative, as compared with the forms of the adjective *czewon-* ‘red’, are:

|      |              |                 |                   |
|------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| (26) |              | ‘red.NOM’       | ‘tidy.PART.NOM’   |
|      | [SG].M       | <i>czewon-y</i> | <i>sprzątan-y</i> |
|      | [SG].F       | <i>czewon-a</i> | <i>sprzątan-a</i> |
|      | [SG].N       | <i>czewon-e</i> | <i>sprzątan-e</i> |
|      | [PL].MHUM    | <i>czewon-i</i> | <i>sprzątan-i</i> |
|      | [PL].NONMHUM | <i>czewon-e</i> | <i>sprzątan-e</i> |

Furthermore, the *-ne/-te* participle falls in the same declensional paradigm as the largest inflectional class of adjectives.<sup>7</sup>

The *-n/-t-* participle is often conventionally labelled a ‘passive participle’ (Pol. *imiesłów bierny*, e.g. Bartnicka 1970: 13, 50; Laskowski 1998a: 268, 1998b: 202; Kallas 1998: 473; Nagórko 1998: 92, 125; Saloni and Świdziński 1998: 192-193; also the Polish IPI PAN Corpus). However, at the same time it is widely acknowledged that the ‘passive’ label does not fit all participles in this class, and authors of academic grammars always clarify that the label ‘passive participle’ merely groups all participles sharing the same morphological form:

We will note here the class of adjectival participles including *ucieszony* [‘one that has become joyous; overjoyed’], *zmartwiony* [‘worried, concerned’], *zadomowiony* [‘ensconced’], *rozpędzony* [‘one that has gathered speed’]. These are productive formations made in a regular fashion from perfective verbs with *się* [‘REFL’] which have inceptive meaning i.e. which denote the beginning of a certain state. ... Participles of

this type, whose *morphological form does not differ from that of passive participles*, are nevertheless fundamentally different from the latter as regards their function. Participles such as *ucieszony* [‘one that has become joyous; overjoyed’], as well as personal forms of verbs they are formed from, represent unmarked diathesis. (Laskowski 1998b: 202-203; my translation and emphasis)

We will treat as adjectives also those lexemes which *have the form of passive participles*, but which are formed from intransitive verbs: *wyspany* [‘one that has slept enough’], *uśmiechnięty* [‘one that has smiled/been smiling’]. (Kallas 1998: 473; my translation and emphasis)

In order to distinguish passive participles from the other type of identically formed participles, some authors resort to calling the latter type ‘morphologically passive participles with active meaning’ (Bartnicka 1970: 52), or ‘irregular’ (as opposed to ‘regular’) passive participles (Saloni and Świdziński 1998: 193).

Many Polish grammars also acknowledge – even though this statement might not be prominent in any particular textbook – that the distinction between ‘true’ passive participles and morphologically passive participles with active meaning is, in fact, not clear cut. On the one hand, participles such as *ukradziony* ‘stolen’ or *recytowany* ‘recited’ are clearly passive in the sense that *list jest/był ukradziony* ‘the letter is/was stolen’ corresponds to *ktoś ukradł list* ‘someone stole/has stolen the letter’, and *liturgia jest recytowana* ‘liturgy is recited’ corresponds to *ktoś recytuje liturgię* ‘someone recites / is reciting the liturgy’ – and this type of correspondence between constructions which use related verb forms is normally treated as a canonical passive alternation. On the other hand, participles such as *wyspany* ‘one that has slept (well/enough)’ or *popękany* ‘cracked’ are clearly non-passive in the sense that *on jest wyspany* ‘he is well-slept’ cannot correspond to the ill-formed ‘\*He has been slept by someone (e.g. his mother)’, and *wazon jest popękany* ‘vase is cracked’ cannot correspond to ‘\*The vase has been cracked by someone’. Instead, *on jest wyspany* ‘he is well-slept’ corresponds to *on się wyspał* ‘he has slept well/enough’, and *wazon jest popękany* ‘vase is cracked’ corresponds to *wazon popękał* ‘the vase has cracked’ – hence, in these cases, no passive alternation can be established.

However, apart from these two clear classes, there is a host of *-n-/-t-* participles whose status as passive or active cannot be resolved unambiguously. For example, *on jest zmartwiony* ‘he is worried/concerned’ could be considered active on the basis of its correspondence to the inchoative *on zmartwił się* ‘he has (become) worried’, or passive on the basis of its correspondence to the causative *ten problem go zmartwił* ‘this problem has worried him / has got him worried’; likewise, *silnik jest zepsuty* ‘the engine is broken’ could be considered active on the basis of its correspondence to the inchoative *silnik zepsuł się* ‘engine has broken’, or passive on the basis of its correspondence to the causative *ktoś zepsuł silnik* ‘someone has broken the engine’. Bartnicka (1970: 50-85) discusses in detail a very large number of actual examples of written and spoken Polish which illustrate this ambiguity, and informally refers to the ambiguous participles as ‘incompletely passive’ (*niezupelnie bierne*). This class of ambiguous participles is by no means a marginal phenomenon – on the contrary, it appears to be representative of the class of *-n-/-t-* participles.

Contrary to the Polish descriptive tradition, but following typological work, I argue that all Polish *-n-/-t-* participles (not just the ‘active’ ones), which obviously result from the same morphological derivation, correspond to what in typological work is known as the *resultative participle*. Nedjalkov and Jaxontov (1988: 6), who

undertook a cross-linguistic study of resultative constructions, define the term ‘resultative’ as indicating ‘those verb forms that express a state implying a previous event’. A resultative participle, therefore, characterises its head ‘by expressing a state that results from a previous event’ (Haspelmath 1994: 159). Although in the Polish descriptive tradition the term ‘resultative’ is normally used only with reference to ‘active’ *-n/-t-* participles (see the first quote above from Laskowski 1998b) and to a smaller class of participles with a similar function formed from the *-t-* stem (e.g. *zbiegły* ‘escaped’, *zwiędły* ‘withered’; see e.g. Laskowski 1998b: 203, and Cetnarowska 2000), I argue that the term should be properly extended to all *-n/-t-* participles, whether ‘passive’, ‘active’, or ambiguous, since in fact all of them are one and the same type of participle. This suggestion is not merely a terminological correction, but – as I will demonstrate below – it helps clarify the important distinction between passive and non-passive constructions, and identify the syntactic status of the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction in Polish.

### 3.2. *The uses of the -n/-t- participle as a resultative participle*

It is widely known that adjectival ‘past’/‘perfect’/‘resultative’ participles (e.g. English *eaten*, *sung*, *fallen*), like many deverbal adjectives (e.g. English *dreadful*, *fearful*), have a semantic ‘orientation’ – a notion that seems to originate from Lehmann (1984: 152). Syntactically, they modify their head noun or complement their subject. Semantically, ‘past’/‘perfect’/‘resultative’ participles are oriented towards the affected participant.

In semantically transitive events the affected participant is usually the patient/theme, hence resultative participles formed from transitive verbs are typically patient/theme-oriented, and therefore *the eaten dog* is understood as ‘the dog that has been eaten’. In semantically intransitive events where the only participant is a patient/undergoer/experiencer, that participant is also typically recognised as affected, hence resultative participles are naturally formed from intransitive unaccusative verbs, and *the fallen leaf* is understood as ‘the leaf that has fallen’. However, if a transitive or an intransitive event can be construed as affecting the agent, agent-oriented resultative participles can also be formed from both transitive and intransitive unergative verbs. Although this construal may perhaps occur less frequently, it is nevertheless widely attested particularly with certain classes of verbs (in particular, verbs of obtaining, wearing, ingestion, and ‘mental ingestion’, see Nedjalkov and Jaxontov 1988: 9, cf. Haspelmath 1994: 174, fn. 10). English examples include *drunk*, which can be used to refer to either the liquid or the person; and the informatively enriched agent-oriented participles in *an unbuilt architect*, *a confessed killer*, *a run-away slave*, *an over-exercised athlete*, *a well-read person*, etc. (examples from Bresnan 2001: 34-36, though used by her to support different argumentation).

Since the operation deriving the resultative participle from the verb involves semantics – the operation takes as its input a semantically unoriented lexical form and outputs a semantically oriented lexical form – it is no surprise that there may be semantic restrictions on the formation of the resultative participle. These will not be discussed here in detail, but need to be mentioned briefly since they apply to Polish *-n/-t-* participles as well. First of all, there is the well-established semantic restriction involving telicity: while telic unaccusatives do form resultative participles (*a fallen leaf*, *a recently appeared book*), atelic unaccusatives typically do not (*\*the remained boy*). In addition to these, there are also pragmatic considerations, for example involving informativeness (e.g. *?a prepared teacher* vs. *a well-prepared teacher*).

All types of Polish resultative participles in *-n-/-t-* can be used as adjectives, and therefore are found in both the attributive position, modifying their head noun, and in the predicative position, complementing the subject of the clause (Bartnicka 1970; see also Szupryczyńska 1980: 38-45). Since Polish syntax does, in principle, allow subjectless constructions, it follows that if the speaker wishes to use an adjectival/adverbial predicate with reference to the ambient quality or location, but without specifying or identifying the referent of the predication, the syntax should allow it. And indeed it does, through the use of subjectless sentences with impersonal adjectival predicates such as the following, where (b) and (c) are repeated from (2):

- (27) a. *Było ładnie/czysto.*  
 was.3SG.N nicely/cleanly  
 ‘[It] was nice/clean [there].’
- b. *Było (ładnie) posprzątane.*  
 was.3SG.N (nicely) tidy-up.PART.SG.N  
 ‘[It] was (nicely) cleaned/tidied up.’
- c. *W pokoju było (ładnie) posprzątane.*  
 in room(M).LOC was.3SG.N (nicely) tidy-up.PART.SG.N  
 ‘It was (nicely) cleaned/tidied up in the room.’

Furthermore, some resultative participles in *-n-/-t-* can be used as main verbs in the passive construction. This applies only to a subset of all resultative participles – specifically, to those which are formed from syntactically unergative verbs – since only unergative predicates can be syntactically passive, as is proposed in the Unaccusative Hypothesis first formulated by Perlmutter (1978). It follows, then, that if the speaker wishes to foreground an intransitively construed event at the cost of not elaborating the agent of this event (and having the option of including it in the clause only as an oblique argument), the syntax also allows this. The following examples contrast a personal variant of the passive in (a) with impersonal passive variants in (b) and (c), all of which are adapted from earlier examples in (8a) and (3b):

- (28) a. *Pomieszczenie było codziennie sprzątane*  
 chamber(N).NOM was.3SG.N every-day tidy.PART.SG.N.NOM  
*(przez firmę).*  
 (by company)  
 ‘The room was cleaned every day (by a [professional] company).’
- b. *Było codziennie sprzątane (przez firmę).*  
 was.3SG.N every-day tidy.PART.SG.N (by company)  
 ‘[It] has been cleaned every day / There has been cleaning every day (by a [professional] company).’
- c. *W pokoju było codziennie sprzątane (przez firmę).*  
 in room(M).LOC was.3SG.N every-day tidy.PART.SG.N (by company)  
 ‘[It] has been cleaned every day in the room / There has been cleaning in the room every day (by a [professional] company).’

I take a closer look at both types of impersonal *-ne/-te* construction in section 4 and exemplify them with sentences found in Polish corpora and the web. For a more detailed discussion of the form and uses of the resultative participle illustrated mostly from English, see Kibort (2005).

### 3.3. *The finite verb*

In its impersonal uses, the *-ne/-te* participle co-occurs with several different types of finite verb which may be analysed as a *copula* or as an *auxiliary* depending on the analysis of the structure they are in.

Following Szupryczyńska (1980: 35-38), I recognise the following verbs as copulas which can co-occur with predicate adjectives including resultative participles: *być/bywać* ‘be’, and *stać się/stawać się* ‘become, come to be’. Additionally, one more verb can be found with adjectival (i.e. resultative) participles derived from perfective verbs, but not with non-derived adjectives (Szupryczyńska 1980: 37): *zostać/zostawać* ‘become, get’. This suggests that, in sentences with adjectival (as opposed to nominal) predicates the verb *zostać/zostawać* ‘become, get’ is not a copula, but an auxiliary in a passive construction. In a recent corpus study of passive constructions in Polish, Górski (2008: 61-63, 67-69) confirms this hypothesis and supports it with examples which demonstrate that *zostać/zostawać* ‘become, get’ plus a resultative participle can only be interpreted as a passive construction alternating with a corresponding active.

The following verbs are unarguably considered auxiliaries of the passive construction (Siewierska 1984: 126-130; Laskowski 1998b: 194-197; Saloni and Świdziński 1998: 320; Górski 2008: 48-50): *być/bywać* ‘be’, and *zostać/zostawać* ‘become, get’. Furthermore, some scholars (e.g. Korytkowska 1993) have suggested that *mieć* ‘have’, as in examples (10)-(11) above, can also be analysed as a passive auxiliary. This hypothesis is supported by the following correspondence (examples from Górski 2008: 44 who cites the example in (29a) from Korytkowska 1993: 172):

- (29) a. *Pacjentka ma/miała zrobioną operację*  
 patient(F).NOM has/had.3SG.F do.PART.SG.F.ACC operation(F).ACC  
*przez znanego chirurga.*  
 by known surgeon  
 ‘The patient had [her] operation done by a well-known surgeon.’
- b. *Znany chirurg zrobił pacjentce operację.*  
 known.M.NOM surgeon(M).NOM did.3SG.M patient(F).DAT operation(F).ACC  
 ‘A/The well-known surgeon performed an operation on the patient.’

It appears that the sentence in (29a) fulfils several characteristics attributed to the passive. However, Górski (2008: 44) remarks that the verbal form *ma zrobioną* ‘has do.PART.SG.F.ACC’ cannot be regarded as related to *zrobił/zrobić* ‘did.3SG.M/do.INF’ by any diathetical morphological derivation. I agree with Górski’s statement that the construction which uses ‘have’ and the resultative participle is grammaticalised (perhaps as an emerging new tense, the ‘perfect’), but in my view the alternation in the assignment of grammatical functions to the arguments of these two predicates is too different from the alternation holding between an active and a passive predicate. I therefore consider (29a) as distinct from the passive, and the *-n/-t-* participle in this example as a member of a secondary predicate which is part of the clausal object of the personal and active verb ‘have’.

#### 4. The syntax of constructions with the *-ne/-te* participle

In the following subsections I discuss the possible syntactic analyses of the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction. I regard the construction made up of the finite verb ‘be’ and the resultative participle as syntactically ambiguous, and demonstrate that it

overlaps with both the impersonal passive of the intransitive (section 4.2) and the predicative adverbial construction (section 4.3).

#### 4.1. Ambiguity of the 'be' + resultative participle construction

It is evident from the long-standing discussion in the literature (most recently, Górski 2008: 61-64ff) that personal sentences with *być* 'be' and the *-n-/-t-* participle do not have a universally accepted analysis. The problem lies, of course, with those sentences where the *-n-/-t-* participle is derived from a transitive verb which denotes a situation that can be construed either causatively or inchoatively. I already mentioned this issue in section 3.1 while discussing the meaning of the *-n-/-t-* participle. I now reiterate and relate this observation to the analysis of the syntactic structure in which the participle is found. Compare sentence (30a) with its inchoative (or, anticausative) counterpart in (b), the passive in (c), and the active (causative) counterpart of the passive in (d):

- (30) a. *Silnik był zepsuty.*  
 engine(M).NOM was.3SG.M break.PART.SG.M.NOM  
 'The engine was broken.'
- b. *Silnik zepsuł się.*  
 engine(M).NOM broke.3SG.M REFL  
 'The engine had/has broken.'
- c. *Silnik był zepsuty przez mechanika.*  
 engine(M).NOM was.3SG.M break.PART.SG.M.NOM by mechanic  
 'The engine was/got broken by the mechanic.'
- d. *Mechanik zepsuł silnik.*  
 mechanic(M).NOM broke.3SG.M engine(M).ACC  
 'The mechanic broke the engine.'

Since (30a) cannot unambiguously be interpreted as corresponding to either the inchoative or the causative variant of *zepsuć* 'break', its morphological form must be considered underdetermined between an active and a passive syntactic structure.

I will assume that, in principle, an impersonal *-ne/-te* construction may be similarly ambiguous. However, unfortunately, the same ambiguity test is not as easily applicable to the impersonal variant of the construction with *być* 'be' and the *-ne/-te* participle, because the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction overwhelmingly tends to be formed from semantically transitive predicates which imply an agent and therefore are unlikely to be construed inchoatively. The following attempt to construct sentences corresponding to the ones in (30) is marginally successful, though the test might not be similarly felicitous with verbs other than 'tidy up':

- (31) a. *Było posprzątane.*  
 was.3SG.N tidy-up.PART.SG.N  
 '[It] was cleaned/tidied up.'
- b. *Posprzątało się (samo).*  
 tidied-up.3SG.N REFL (own-self.N)  
 '[It] tidied up (by itself). / [The place] got tidied up (by itself).'
- c. *Było posprzątane przez Piotra.*  
 was.3SG.N tidy-up.PART.SG.N by Peter  
 '[It] was tidied up by Peter.'

- d. *To Piotr posprzątał.*  
 this Peter(M).NOM tidied-up.3SG.M  
 ‘It was Peter who tidied up.’

#### 4.2. *Overlap with impersonal passives of intransitives*

I consider passivisation to be a morphosyntactic alternation relating two predicates, an active one and its corresponding passive variant. More specifically, following syntactic analyses deriving from the Relational Grammar tradition, I analyse the passive as an operation on the argument structure of a predicate which downgrades the unergative argument, typically expressing an agent, to the grammatical function of an oblique. In transitive predicates, the argument expressing the patient or theme is granted the grammatical function of the subject of the passive clause. In intransitive predicates, which have no argument expressing a patient or theme, the resulting passive clause is subjectless. Although passivisation is not restricted to transitive predicates, it is applicable only to unergative predicates (as first formulated by Perlmutter 1978). At first glance, it appears therefore that many, perhaps most, instances of the the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction could be analysed as impersonal passive.

Although it seems obvious that the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction should feature in descriptions of the Polish passive construction, very few publications actually mention and illustrate Polish impersonal passives of intransitives at all. The notable exceptions include Lewicki (1964), Brajerski (1979), and more recently Słoń (2008).

Lewicki offers a list of Polish constructions expressing ‘activities and human states impersonally’, and one of the constructions included in the ‘impersonal predicates’ category is the impersonal passive. Lewicki remarks that this construction is found mostly in dialects, as well as in standard spoken Polish; it is rare in the written language (particularly in the academic prose) because it is ‘imprecise’. He cites two examples of impersonal passives from literary Polish (both are taken from *Pisma wybrane*, vol. 1, by Maria Dąbrowska, published in Warsaw in 1956), and emphasises that both instances are stylistic devices (1964: 316):

- (32) a. *Namawiał dalej, ażeby stąd wyjechała. (...)*  
 encouraged further so-that from-here departed  
*Że nie wymówione? Ale wymówić można, kiedy chcąc.*  
 that not given-notice but give-notice can when want  
 ‘He was encouraging [her] further to leave this place. (...) That [it has] not [been] given notice? But one can give notice when one wants to.’
- b. *Mieli też niemało swoich domowych frasunków, na które w odezwach i namowach docierających do wsi nie było wskazane żadnej dobrej ani prędkiej rady.*  
 had also not-little own household problems to which in appeals and prompts arriving at village not was indicated/offered any good or quick advice  
 ‘They also had quite a few household problems of their own for [the solution of] which [it] was not offered any good or quick advice in the appeals and prompts arriving at the village.’

Without further diachronic study it is impossible to tell whether Lewicki was right in stating that the impersonal passive in Polish in the mid-20th century was indeed so severely restricted to dialects and stylisations. One possibility is that – rather like nowadays – the construction may have been more frequent than assumed, but somehow did not enter into the academic descriptions of the language; another is that other impersonal sentences with the *-ne/-te* participle (if there were indeed any) were classified as non-passive predicative adverbial constructions (see section 4.3). It is also important to note that while example (32a) corresponds to many contemporary examples of the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction, such as (33), the same cannot be said of example (32b).

- (33) *Bo nie było powiedziane konkretnie. Pan minister wypowiedział się, że jeden z wariantów...*  
 because not was said specifically mister minister expressed  
 REFL that one of options  
 ‘Because [it] was not said specifically. The minister expressed himself that one of the options...’

In contemporary Polish, example (32b) would instead have the form of:

- (34) *Nie było wskazanej żadnej dobrej rady.*  
 NEG was.3SG.N offer.PART.SG.F.GEN any.SG.F.GEN good SG.F.GEN  
 advice(F).GEN  
 ‘There was no good advice offered.’

Example (34) is a personal clause with a ‘non-agreeing’ genitive subject. It illustrates the contemporary way of expressing existential negation, as opposed to standard or verbal negation exemplified in (35) which has a canonical nominative subject:

- (35) *Nie była wskazana żadna dobra rada.*  
 NEG was3SG.F offer.PART.SG.F.NOM any.SG.F.NOM good SG.F.NOM  
 advice(F).NOM  
 ‘No good advice was offered.’

I hypothesise that the structure in (32b) is an instance of an earlier form of existential negation in the passive, where both the auxiliary and the participle were in the ‘default’ non-agreeing form. Although this form seems to have been replaced now by the participle agreeing with the noun in the genitive case, rare modern examples such as (36) found in the PELCRA corpus might perhaps be considered fossils of the earlier structure:

- (36) *Nie ma na tym napisane.*  
 NEG has on this write.PART.SG.N  
 ‘There isn’t [anything] written on this.’

I leave this interesting question for further study.

Brajerski (1979), in his article on the impersonal predicates ending in *-no/-to*, mentions the impersonal passive of the intransitive in footnote 30 (p. 96). He argues that impersonal passives formed from perfective verbs, such as the ones below, have meanings very close to predicative adverbials (see section 4.3):

- (37) a. *W piecach już napalone.*  
 in stoves already lit

- ‘[It has] already [been] lit in stoves.’
- b. *Tam pod lasem już zaorane.*  
there by forest already ploughed  
‘There by the forest [it is] already ploughed.’
- c. *W pokoju było posprzątane.*  
in room was cleaned  
‘In the room [it] was cleaned/tidied up.’

On the other hand, he argues that impersonal passives formed from imperfective verbs have meanings which are clearly verbal:

- (38) a. *W piecach jest teraz właśnie palone.*  
in stoves is now just lit  
‘[It] is [being] lit in stoves just now.’
- b. *Pod lasem jeszcze nie orane.*  
by forest yet not ploughed  
‘[It has] not yet [been] ploughed by the forest.’
- c. *Proszę nie wchodzić, bo tu jest teraz sprzątane.*  
please not enter because here is now cleaned  
‘Please don’t come in, as [it] is [being] cleaned here now.’

Other authors and a recent corpus study of the Polish passive by Górski (2008) do not confirm Brajerski’s hypothesis of the simple division into a non-passive adverbial construction and a passive verbal construction on the basis of the aspect of the verb. But at least Brajerski explicitly mentions and illustrates the impersonal passive in his paper. In a large number of other studies of the impersonal passive, whether by Polish or foreign authors, the Polish impersonal passive is misrepresented by the *-no/-to* construction which, though impersonal, is not structurally or syntactically passive (see Kibort 2004, 2006, 2008 for detailed argumentation). The distinction between the impersonal *-no/-to* construction and the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction is rightfully recognised and approached from the cognitive grammar perspective in the recent work by Słoń (for example 2008).

The reason why impersonal passives are, or appear to be, less common in Polish than morphological impersonals is that both types of construction largely compete for the same communicative space. However, since morphological impersonals entail an agent which is either generic or indefinite, impersonal passives are found naturally in situations where the speaker wants to foreground an intransitively construed event. Consider the following selection of examples from this point of view:

- (39) a. A: *Było już sprawdzane u Państwa?*  
A: was.3SG.N already check.PART.SG.N at ladies-and-gentlemen  
B: *Tak, tak, było sprawdzane.*  
B: yes yes was.3SG.N check.PART.SG.N  
‘Has there already been checking at yours? Yes, yes, there has been checking.’ (an exchange between the ticket conductor and passengers on the train)
- b. *Było codziennie sprzątane.*  
was.3SG.N daily clean.PART.SG.N  
‘There was cleaning every day.’ (from a customer review of a hotel)

- c. *Wchodzisz i czujesz, że było **palone**.*  
 come-in.2SG and feel/smell.2SG that was.3SG.N smoke.PART.SG.N  
 ‘You come in and you can smell that there has been smoking [here].’
- d. *Będzie ci **wybaczone**, jeśli przeprosisz.*  
 be.FUT.3SG you.2SG.DAT forgive.PART.SG.N if apologise.FUT.2SG  
 ‘[It] will be forgiven you if you apologise.’
- e. *Jeszcze nie jest **dokończone**. Nie ma firanek, ...*  
 yet NEG is finish.PART.SG.N NEG has[=is] window-nets ...  
 ‘It’s not finished yet [in here]. There are missing window nets, ...’
- f. *Na strychu nie było **sprzątane** od lat.*  
 on attic NEG was.3SG.N clean.PART.SG.N since years  
 ‘The attic hasn’t been cleaned for years.’ (Słoń 2008: 2)
- g. *W połowie miesiąca było **zapłacone**.*  
 in middle month was.3SG.N yet once pay.PART.SG.N  
 ‘In the middle of the month, it was paid once again [the payment was made once again].’ (adapted from Słoń 2008: 3)
- h. *Rano było **dzwonione** na miasto.*  
 morning was.3SG.N phone.PART.SG.N onto town  
 ‘There was a call out to town [an external call] made this morning.’  
 (adapted from Słoń 2008: 3)

It can be demonstrated that, unlike morphological *-no/-to* impersonals, impersonal passives do not have a subject which could participate in syntactic control or binding:

- (40) a. *\*Było sprawdzane przejeżdżając przez Poznań.*  
 was.3SG.N check.PART.SG.N PASS.PART<sub>CONTEMP</sub> through Poznań  
 ‘There was checking [the tickets were checked] while passing through Poznań.’
- cf. b. *Było sprawdzane gdy przejeżdżaliśmy przez Poznań.*  
 was.3SG.N check.PART.SG.N when passed.1PL.MHUM through Poznań  
 ‘There was checking [the tickets were checked] while we were passing through Poznań.’
- c. *\*Tutaj było **palone** czekając na egzamin.*  
 here was.3SG.N smoke.PART.SG.N wait.PART<sub>CONTEMP</sub> for exam  
 ‘It was smoked here while waiting for the exam.’
- (41) a. *\*Było codziennie sprzątane we wszystkich swoich pokojach.*  
 was.3SG.N daily clean.PART.SG.N in all.PL.LOC own[REFL].PL.LOC rooms(NONMHUM).LOC  
 ‘There was cleaning every day in all of one’s own rooms.’
- cf. b. *Było codziennie sprzątane we wszystkich naszych/ich pokojach.*  
 was.3SG.N daily clean.PART.SG.N in all.PL.LOC our.LOC/their.LOC rooms(NONMHUM).LOC  
 ‘There was cleaning every day in all of our/their rooms.’

However, despite having no subject, impersonal passives have an agent which may be expressed overtly in a prepositional phrase, like in the personal passive:

- (42) a. *Było sprzątane, przez firmę.*  
 was.3SG.N clean.PART.SG.N by company  
 ‘The cleaning has already been done, by a [professional] company.’
- b. *Nie widać, żeby tutaj było sprzątane*  
 NEG see.[NONPERS] COMPL.[3SG] here was.3SG.N clean.PART.SG.N  
*przez firmę.*  
 by company  
 ‘It doesn’t look as if this place was cleaned by a [professional] company.’
- c. *Było sprawdzane, przez innego konduktora.*  
 was.3SG.N check.PART.SG.N by different conductor  
 ‘There has [already] been checking [of tickets], by a different conductor.’
- d. *Czy na tej ulicy już było sypane*  
 INTERR on this street already was.3SG.N grit.PART.SG.N  
*przez kogokolwiek?*  
 by anyone  
 ‘Has there already been spreading [of grit] on this street by anyone?’

The overt expression of the oblique agent in the impersonal passive does not seem to be as easily acceptable as in the personal passive, but this is more likely to be due to pragmatic and information structure considerations rather than syntax. It has also been observed that impersonal passives ‘often have an implicitly human interpretation, which suggests that this interpretation is associated with subjectless forms of personal verbs, irrespective of the syntactic source of that subjectlessness’ (Blevins 2003: 489). However, unlike in the Polish *-no/-to* impersonal, but similar to the reflexive impersonal, this default human agent interpretation can be overridden in the impersonal passive, as is demonstrated in example (43):

- (43) *Ptak sprawdza każdą próbkę. W tej było już*  
 bird checks every test-tube in this-one was.3SG.N already  
*sprawdzane.*  
 check.PART.SG.N  
 ‘The bird checks every test tube [for food]. In this one the checking has already been done.’ (from a description of an experiment)

This is an important point which shows that the (frequently tacit) assumption about impersonal passives being restricted to the human agent interpretation is incorrect. This restriction may perhaps be a tendency, but it is certainly not universal.

Regarding the syntactic restriction on passives being limited to unergative predicates, but being unapplicable to unaccusative predicates, there is every evidence that this is upheld in impersonal passives. Questionable (i.e. apparently unaccusative) instances of impersonal passives could be analysed as non-passive predicative adverbial constructions. However, it appears that in practice *-ne/-te* participles used impersonally tend to be formed only from unergative verbs, so the question of potentially compromising the analysis of the passive does not seem to arise.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from the syntactic features of the passive construction discussed above, other features ascribed to the passive do not apply distinctively to this construction,

therefore I do not elaborate on them here. One such feature is the apparent verbal as opposed to adjectival (or, adverbial, in the impersonal variant) character of the participle. On the basis of an extensive corpus study of the Polish personal passive, Górski (2008: 61-64) concludes that the same lexeme may have either a verbal or an adjectival interpretation in different contexts. Furthermore, he draws the same conclusion for the well-known distinction between stative and actional passive by demonstrating that sometimes it simply cannot be established (2008: 73-78). Similarly, aspectual differences do not seem to reflect any definitive structural differences between constructions. I have not researched in detail any aspectual issues pertaining to the Polish impersonal passive, but see Abraham and Leiss (2006a, b) for an extensive discussion of aspectual restrictions on impersonal passives in German, which may serve as a guide in the study of this area of Polish passives.

For these reasons, numerous Polish authors treat the passive as a purely syntactic phenomenon pertaining to the clause, rather than a morphological phenomenon pertaining to the verb (see e.g. Szupryczyńska 1973: 73-91; Laskowski 1998b: 194-197; Saloni and Świdziński 1998: 100, 320; Górski 2008: 49-50). My own analysis of the formation of resultative participles from verbs as a morphological derivation, and of the passive as a morphosyntactic operation on the argument structure of predicates, is compatible with the conclusions of these authors and locates the overlap between the ‘be’-passive and the adverbial predicative construction at the level of the formal expression of the two constructions.

#### 4.3. *Overlap with the predicative adverbial construction*

Since the passive construction in Polish – as well as in English – uses the resultative participle as its main verb (with an auxiliary ‘be’ or ‘become’), the verbal complex in ‘be’-passives has an identical form to the copular construction with an adjectival/adverbial predicate. The following are garden variety examples of Polish sentences with a copula and a predicate adjective or adverb, respectively:

- (44) a. *Był zimny/ciemny/straszny/przyjemny.*  
 was.3SG.M cold/dark/horrible/pleasant.SG.M  
 ‘He/It was cold/dark/horrible/pleasant.’
- b. *Było zimno/ciemno/strasznie/przyjemnie.*  
 was.3SG.N coldly/darkly/horribly/pleasantly  
 ‘[It] was cold/dark/horrible/pleasant.’

Standard descriptions of Polish, such as Laskowski (1998b: 187-197), state explicitly that *jest czytany* ‘is read.PART.SG.M’ has the same form as *jest młody* ‘is young.SG.M’.

Frajzyngier (1978: 149-150) regards ‘be’-passives as formally a subclass of subject-complement clauses which he calls ‘nominal sentences’. He defines ‘nominal sentences’ as sentences with nominal predicates, or ‘copular constructions’, whose logical structure can be either  $X=Y$  (as in: *Elizabeth II is the present Queen of England*) or  $X \in Y$  (as in: *Salt is white*) (Frajzyngier cites both examples from Suppes 1957: 101). Frajzyngier argues that ‘be’-passives differ from other nominal sentences only in the fact that the predicate in ‘be’-passives (i.e. the participle following the copula/auxiliary) is morphologically derived from the lexical class of verbs, while in other nominal sentences it does not have to be so derived: ‘we might have languages, such as Semitic, in which not only verbal adjectives are derived from verbs but such nominal categories as agent, instrument, name of action and place of action’ (1978: 150). Therefore, formally there is no distinction between ‘be’-passives and other

nominal sentences. Based on the analysis of a sample of over thirty languages chosen at random from several language families, Frajzyngier further points out that there are no languages that have ‘be’-passives but do not have nominal sentences formed with a copula. Moreover, the passive form in a language will contain the equivalent of ‘be’ only if the nominal sentence contains ‘be’. Finally, diachronic analysis shows that ‘be’-passives are, generally, more recent forms than other passives or statives. The most natural explanation of the similarity between ‘be’-passives and stative nominal sentences is, therefore, that the former developed from the latter, and this happened because nominal sentences with a copula presented a suitable structure for the realisation of the passive. ‘In languages for which the ‘be’-passives are attested in the oldest available texts, one can claim that actually there is no distinction between be-passives and nominal sentences’ (Frajzyngier 1978: 154).

Returning to example (44), while (44a) is personal, it is uncontested that (44b) is genuinely impersonal, with no possibility of reconstructing any hypothetical omitted subject (e.g. infinitival). Although in any particular context it may be possible to interpret the adverb as a modifier relating to some more or less abstract referent which is present in the context of the utterance – for example, the ‘air’, ‘situation’, etc. – there is no trace of a subject or instigator in the syntactic or semantic structure of this clause.

Adverbs in modern Polish, such as those in (44b), have the ending *-o/-ie* distinct from the 3SG.N adjectival ending in *-e*. In contrast, *-n/-t-* participles used impersonally have the ‘default non-agreeing’ 3SG.N ending in *-e*. The *-n/-t-* participial form ending in *-o* does exist, but in modern Polish it has a different function: as mentioned earlier, the *-no/-to* participle is used (currently without an auxiliary) as the main verb of the morphological impersonal which does not accept an overt expression of a subject but has a syntactically active covert subject which participates in control, raising, and reflexive binding (see Kibort 2004, 2006, 2008). Bartnicka (1970: 158) remarks that if the *-n/-t-* participles had the ending *-o* when used as predicate adverbs, they would be indistinguishable from the special impersonal forms. She hypothesises that this must have been the reason why *-n/-t-* participles used as predicate adverbs almost exclusively have the ‘default non-agreeing’ 3SG.N inflection *-e*.

The fact that *-ne/-te* participles in subjectless sentences can function as adverbs seems to be confirmed by the possibility of conjoining the two types of element. The following examples, found on the web, are unquestionably grammatical:

- (45) a. *Żeby było sprawiedliwie to napiszę, że generalnie było*  
 so-that was fair then write that generally was  
*czysto i posprzątane.*  
 cleanly and tidied-up  
 ‘In order that [it] is fair, I will write that generally [it] was clean and tidied up.’
- b. *W domu wszędzie było czysto i posprzątane...*  
 in home everywhere was cleanly and tidied-up  
*wydawało się, że żyliśmy dostatnio.*  
 seemed REFL that lived affluently  
 ‘Everywhere at home [it] was clean and tidied up... it looked like we were living in affluence.’
- c. *Raz tylko po sztormie były na plaży glony, ale po południu już*

once only after storm were on beach algae but after noon already  
*było czysto i posprzątane.*  
 was cleanly and tidied-up  
 ‘Only once after a storm there were algae on the beach, but already in the  
 afternoon [it] was clean and tidied up.’

- d. *Smutne... bo naprawdę się staram żeby było czysto i*  
 sad because really REFL strive that was cleanly and  
*posprzątane, ugotowane, ale dziecko jest tak absorbujące, że ...*  
 tidied-up cooked but child is so absorbing that  
 ‘[It’s] sad... because I really make an effort so that [it] is clean and tidied  
 up, cooked, but the child is so absorbing that...’
- e. *Mam wrażenie, że w całym domu mam brudno i nieposprzątane.*  
 have impression that in whole house have dirty-ly and not-tidied-up  
 ‘I have an impression that in the whole house I have [it] dirty and not  
 tidied up.’
- f. *Jakiś gość zwrócił kelnerowi uwagę, że jest brudno i*  
 some fellow told waiter remark that is dirty-ly and  
*nieposprzątane ze stołu po poprzednich gościach.*  
 not-tidied-up from table after previous guests  
 ‘Some guy made a remark to the waiter that [it] is dirty and not tidied up  
 from the table after the previous guests.’
- g. *Jak w domu masz brudno i nieposprzątane to kogo to jest wina?*  
 when in home have dirty-ly and not-tidied-up then whose it is fault  
 ‘When you have [it] dirty and not tidied up at home, then whose fault is  
 it?’
- h. *Kiedyś tam byłem to pusto, cicho i pozamykane.*  
 sometime there was then empty-ly quiet-ly and closed  
 ‘I was there some time ago and [it was] empty, quiet and [all] closed.’
- i. *Zbadał mnie na fotelu no i jak “dziewica” jestem,*  
 examined me on chair so and like virgin am  
*ciasno, cicho i pozamykane.*  
 tightly quiet-ly and closed  
 ‘He examined me on the chair, and so I am like a “virgin”, [it is] tight,  
 quiet and closed.’

The fact that the impersonal passive of the intransitive and the impersonal adverbial construction may both occur with ‘be’ makes it impossible to determine whether some sentences are passive or non-passive. I suggest that the best solution is to treat sentences with ‘be’ and resultative participles as underspecified with regard to which construction they instantiate, and for syntactic frameworks to provide an appropriate model of such an underspecification.

## 5. Location arguments in *-ne/-te* and predicative adverbial impersonals

In this section I briefly address the question of the grammatical status of the location arguments in the *-ne/-te* impersonal construction and in the predicative adverbial impersonal. I assume that prepositional phrases expressing locations of the

foregrounded event or ambient quality in *-ne/-te* and predicative adverbial impersonals are oblique arguments rather than adjuncts. A detailed discussion of their syntactic status is beyond the scope of this chapter, however I want to emphasise that they should not be considered syntactic subjects of those sentences.

Impersonal sentences such as (46a-b), with oblique location arguments, clearly contrast with personal sentences in (47a-b) in which the location arguments are expressed as subjects:

- (46) a. *W pokoju było codziennie sprzątane.*  
 in room(M).LOC was.3SG.N every-day tidy.PART.SG.N  
 ‘[It] has been cleaned every day in the room. / There has been cleaning in the room every day.’
- b. *W pokoju było ładnie posprzątane.*  
 in room(M).LOC was.3SG.N nicely tidy-up.PART.SG.N  
 ‘It was nicely cleaned/tidied up in the room.’
- (47) a. *Pokój był codziennie sprzątany.*  
 room(m).NOM was.3SG.M every-day tidy.PART.SG.M.NOM  
 ‘The room was cleaned every day.’
- b. *Pokój był ładnie posprzątany.*  
 room(M).NOM was.3SG.M nicely tidy-up.PART.SG.M.NOM  
 ‘The room was nicely cleaned/tidied up.’

In (47), both ‘be’ and the *-n-/-t-* participle show agreement with the subject noun phrase, while in (46) such agreement is not established.

I demonstrated in section 4.2 that impersonal passives do not have a subject which could participate in syntactic control and binding. The existence of a prepositional phrase expressing the location argument does not change this, since the prepositional phrase does not function as the grammatical subject of these sentences. Example (49) is repeated from (41):

- (48) a. *\*W pokoju było sprzątane oglądając*  
 in room(M).LOC was.3SG.N tidy.PART.SG.N watch.PART<sub>CONTEMP</sub>  
*telewizję.*  
 television(F).ACC  
 ‘There was cleaning in the room while watching television.’
- cf. b. *W pokoju było sprzątane gdy oglądaliśmy*  
 in room(M).LOC was.3SG.N tidy.PART.SG.N when watched.1PL.MHUM  
*telewizję.*  
 television(F).ACC  
 ‘There was cleaning in the room while we were watching television.’
- cf. c. *Sprzątaczką sprzątała w pokoju oglądając*  
 cleaning-lady(F).NOM tidied.3SG.F in room(M).LOC watch.PART<sub>CONTEMP</sub>  
*telewizję.*  
 television(F).ACC  
 ‘The cleaning lady was cleaning in the room while watching television.’
- (49) a. *\*Było codziennie sprzątane we wszystkich swoich*  
 was.3SG.N daily clean.PART.SG.N in all.PL.LOC own[REFL].PL.LOC  
*pokojach.*  
 rooms(NONMHUM).LOC

‘There was cleaning every day in all of one’s own rooms.’

- cf. b. *Było codziennie sprzątane we wszystkich naszych/ich pokojach.*  
was.3SG.N daily clean.PART.SG.N in all.PL.LOC our.LOC/their.LOC  
rooms(NONMHUM).LOC  
‘There was cleaning every day in all of our/their rooms.’

It seems clear that the ‘cleaning’ event can be conceptualised in several different ways, and examples (46) and (47) demonstrate that the ‘room’ can be conceptualised as either a location or as a patient/theme of the ‘cleaning’. Thus, we observe an argument alternation which yields two different constructions. Nevertheless, when the ‘room’ is expressed through a prepositional phrase, it is not a subject.

## 6. Summary and conclusions

My goal for this chapter was to give an overview of the little studied Polish impersonal construction which uses the participle *-n/-t-* bearing the singular neuter inflection *-e*. I began by showing the general distribution of the *-ne/-te* participle in both personal and impersonal sentences and focused on the impersonal sentences such as:

- (50) a. *Było sprawdzane.*  
was.3SG.N check.PART.SG.N  
‘[It] has been checked. / The checking has been done.’  
b. *Jest sprawdzane.*  
is check.PART.SG.N  
‘[It] is checked. / [It] has been checked.’

On a communicative-functional view, the construction exemplified in (50) involves agent or instigator defocusing, while on a structural view it lacks a subject. More specifically, the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction has neither an overt, nor an omitted or covert syntactic subject which could participate in syntactic operations such as control or binding. In other words, this construction is not only functionally impersonal, but also subjectless.

In terms of syntax, the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction overlaps with both the impersonal passive of the intransitive, and with the impersonal predicative adverbial construction such as:

- (51) *Było zimno.*  
was.3SG.N coldly  
‘[It] was cold.’

In terms of form, the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction is made up of a finite auxiliary verb or copula and a resultative participle. The resultative participle can be derived from both unergative and unaccusative verbs (both transitive and intransitive). If we came across an impersonal *-ne/-te* construction with the resultative participle derived from an unaccusative verb, it would be analysed as a non-passive copular adverbial clause. However, there does not seem to be any functional motivation to produce such sentences. On the other hand, if we came across an impersonal *-ne/-te* construction with the auxiliary *zostać/zostawać* ‘become, get’ plus a resultative

participle, it would be analysed as an impersonal passive clause, since it could be interpreted only as a passive construction alternating with a corresponding active.

Unfortunately, the situation is not so simple. The impersonal *-ne/-te* construction is very common, but its instances which are most commonly found are ambiguous between the two interpretations and analyses. I therefore argue that, just like the form of the personal passive with ‘be’, the form of the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction with ‘be’ and a resultative participle is underspecified with regard to which of the two syntactic constructions (passive verbal or non-passive adverbial) it instantiates. Hence, syntactic frameworks need to provide an appropriate model for this type of underspecification.

Finally, it is important to note that the impersonal *-ne/-te* construction provides one more piece of clear evidence against constraints, proposed in most theoretical syntactic frameworks, that require all clauses to have subjects (including null or shared subjects).

## Abbreviations

|                         |                               |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1                       | first person                  |
| 2                       | second person                 |
| 3                       | third person                  |
| ACC                     | accusative                    |
| COMPL                   | complementiser                |
| DAT                     | dative                        |
| F                       | feminine                      |
| FUT                     | future                        |
| GEN                     | genitive                      |
| INE                     | inessive                      |
| INF                     | infinitive                    |
| INTERR                  | interrogative                 |
| IMPERS                  | impersonal                    |
| LOC                     | locative                      |
| M                       | masculine                     |
| MHUM                    | masculine human               |
| N                       | neuter                        |
| NEG                     | negative                      |
| NOM                     | nominative                    |
| NONMHUM                 | non-masculine human           |
| NONPERS                 | non-personal                  |
| PART                    | participle                    |
| PART <sub>CONTEMP</sub> | contemporaneous participle    |
| PL                      | plural                        |
| PV                      | preverbal affix               |
| REFL                    | reflexive marker              |
| SG                      | singular                      |
| VA                      | (Hungarian) <i>-va</i> suffix |

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to distinguish this type of default form, an ‘exceptional case default’, from a ‘normal case default’. The former applies in situations like the one described here, i.e. when the normal agreement system breaks down, while the latter is the most typical or general case which applies normally (Fraser and Corbett 1997; Corbett 2006: 147ff).

<sup>3</sup> The reason for my suggestion that even in undisputably passive sentences the participle can be argued to inflect for case are examples such as the following, where the participle bears genitive case agreeing with the case of the quantified noun of the subject noun phrase:

- (i) *Pięciu żołnierzy zostało zastrzelonych*  
five.GEN soldiers(MHUM).GEN became.3SG.N shoot.PART.PL.GEN  
*przez snajperów.*  
by snipers  
‘Five soldiers were shot by snipers.’

Note that the case value of the numeral in such subject phrases is disputed; a discussion of this issue is, however, beyond the scope of this chapter.

<sup>4</sup> I have taken this sentence and (13b-c) from Dombrowski (2006: 28), but as they all illustrate common phenomena, many more examples could easily be provided.

<sup>5</sup> Tóth (2000: 239, fn. 2) explains that ‘[i]n the glosses PV stands for preverbal element. Among some other functions, this element marks the perfectivity of the predicate.’

<sup>6</sup> The choice of the *-n-* vs. *-t-* variant of the suffix in the formation of the participial stem depends on the phonological makeup of the verb stem to which it is attached. In an academic textbook of morphology, Laskowski (1998a: 268-269) breaks up the participial suffix into four variants: *-n-/-t-/-on-/-et-*, and specifies in detail the conditions for their choice as well as the additional sound alterations in the verb stem that may be induced by the formation of the participle.

<sup>7</sup> Additionally, the *-n-/-t-* participle can occur with the ending *-o* which falls outside the number-gender-case adjectival paradigm and realises a unique impersonal ending as well as turns the participle into a finite verb form with past tense meaning, e.g. *sprzątan-o* ‘tidied.IMPERS’.

<sup>8</sup> Note that Abraham (current volume) offers an interesting discussion of the semantic and syntactic correlates of unaccusativity in relation to impersonal constructions, both passive and non-passive (such as the Polish morphological impersonal ending in *-no/-to*).

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