

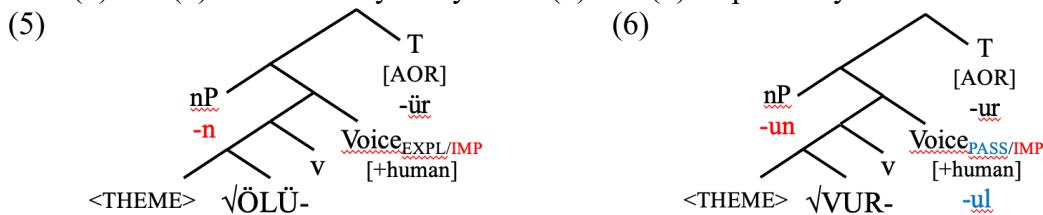
Impersonal is Parasitic

The Unaccusative Hypothesis (Perlmutter 1978) predicts that impersonal passives (IMPs) of unaccusatives are impossible. Turkish IMPs have been a point of discussion because they seem to contradict this claim: In the Turkish IMP in (3), a passive morpheme occurs on the unaccusative verb ‘die’. Another separate but related issue is that Turkish allows two passive morphemes on the same verb, creating a “double passive”, as in (4). How is it possible to passivize an already passive sentence? Examples (1) and (2) illustrate the canonical active-passive contrast:

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| (1) <i>Bahçivan çiçek-ler-i sula-di</i>
Gardener flower-PL-ACC water-PST
‘The gardener watered the flowers.’ | (2) <i>Çiçek-ler (bahçivan tarafından) sula-n-di</i>
flower-PL (gardener by) water-PASS-PST
‘The flowers were watered (by the gardener).’ |
| (3) <i>Bu soğuk-ta ölü-n-ür.</i>
this cold-LOC die-PASS-AOR.3
‘One dies of this cold.’ | (4) <i>Harp-te vur-ul-un-ur.</i>
war-LOC shoot-PASS-PASS-AOR.3
‘One is shot in war.’ (Özkaragöz 1986) |

Much of the literature on this topic seeks to explain this phenomenon through Relational Grammar (Perlmutter 1978, Biktimir 1986, Özkaragöz 1986, among others), with little work within Minimalism (Murphy 2014, Legate et al. 2020, Dikmen et al. 2022). Legate et al. (2020) distinguish the impersonal from the passive and analyze the IMPs as having a null *pro* licensed by an Impers projection (homophonous with Voice). They analyze (4) as an impersonal of a passive, i.e. having two distinct projections: Voice and Impers. However, this account is not fully satisfying, because the following questions remain: If the passive and impersonal are two separate structures, why are they homophonous? Could the underlying argument be the passive morpheme itself (Baker et al. 1989, Dikmen et al. 2022), or something else? Also, why are there certain aspect and tense restrictions on impersonals of unaccusatives and double passives, but not unergatives?

I distinguish IMP from the canonical passive (*Voice_{PASS}*), following Legate et al (2020). Assuming different flavours of Voice for different verb structures (Sigurðsson 2011, Shäfer 2017), I propose that the IMP ‘flavour’ is parasitically superimposed on Voice. That is, IMP is overlaid on the existing structure (e.g. *Voice_{EXPL}* → *Voice_{EXPL/IMP}*) and then selects for a specifier (if it is not already present). A non-referential indefinite argument (nP) must fill that specifier to value the unvalued [+human] features of IMP. That argument then receives the highest available theta role. The trees (5) and (6) below are my analyses of (3) and (4) respectively.



Assuming the Distributed Morphology (DM) framework (Halle and Marantz 1993), I propose that the ‘marked’ feature of the passive morpheme is the only one that matches the ‘marked’ feature of *Voice_{PASS}* or *Voice_{IMP}*, forcing the nP argument to be spelled-out as -(u)n. This argument cannot be a DP as in Legate et al. (2020) since it *must* be non-referential and indefinite. Furthermore, I argue that the aspect and tense restrictions arise from this argument being non-specific and indefinite.

This analysis of the impersonal offers a new Minimalist perspective on Turkish double passives. It explains the homophony between Voice and Impers while avoiding the need for more functional structure, and accounts for all observed restrictions. In addition, it is flexible enough to be applied to other Turkic languages, such as Sakha and Uzbek, as well as languages beyond Turkic, like Romance, that have different syntactic restrictions on and patterns of the impersonal.

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