

Revisiting Turkish Reflexive Verbs

Zeynep Feyza Erdemir, Boğaziçi University

1. Introduction

This work revisits the distribution and the semantic-syntactic properties of the reflexive morphemes {-In} and {-Il} in Turkish. Based on an empirical observation, I show that reflexives in Turkish come in three flavors (cf. Key 2021): i) {-Il}-Figure, ii) {-In}-Figure, and iii) Ground reflexives by applying relevant tests to the data. The results demonstrate that these three types of reflexive verbs have different argument and event structures from each other. Lastly, I present an analysis of this three-way distinction based on Ramchand's (2008) theory of argument structure.

2. Background

In the initial investigations of Turkish reflexives, it was asserted that reflexive verbs are derived by a single suffix {-In} (Göksel, 1993). Subsequent research indicated that reflexive verbs could be derived by both suffixes, {-Il} as in *eğ-il* 'to bend oneself', and {-In} as in *öv-ün* 'to praise oneself'. Gündoğdu (2017) interpreted Turkish reflexive verbs within the category of unaccusatives, and morphemes only have an allomorphic variation. Key (2021) conversely argued {-Il} and {-In} to be distinct suffixes. Instead, the distinction is attributed to the entities that corefer. {-In}-derived verbs are named Ground reflexives, as the agent and goal corefer (1a), whereas {-Il}-derived verbs are named Figure reflexives, as the agent and theme corefer (1b):

- (1) a. Ayşe mutfak-ta (ekmek) tık-ın-dı. b. Ayşe küçük yatağ-a tık-ıl-dı.
Ayşe kitchen-LOC (bread) stuff-In-PST Ayşe small-DIM bed-DAT stuff-Il-PST
SUBJ.GOAL THEME VERB-*In* SUBJ.THEME GOAL VERB-*Il*
'Ayşe stuffed herself (eating) with bread in the kitchen' 'Ayşe stuffed herself into the tiny bed.'
(modified from Key, 2021)

3. Observations on Turkish Reflexives

My observation is that the verbs that have the agent and theme co-reference in their argument structure are not exclusively derived with {-Il}. There are also Figure reflexives with the morpheme {-In}. {-In}-Figure reflexives have the same suffix as Ground reflexives but apparently their argument structure is more similar to {-Il}-Figure reflexives. As demonstrated in the Table below, these three types of reflexives verbs can form minimal pairs with each other:

Type	Suffix	Argument Structure	Example Sentence	Ramchand (2008) Representation
Figure	{-Il}	THEME _i , AGENT _i	(2) Çocuk yarışmadan çek- <i>il</i> -di (3) Ayşe küçük yatağa tık- <i>ıl</i> -dı.	çek-[init _i , proc _i , res] tık-[init _i , proc _i , res]
Figure	{-In}	THEME _i , AGENT _i	(4) Bebek yerde sür- <i>ün</i> -dü. (5) Çocuk yarışmadan çek- <i>in</i> -di.	sür-[init _i , proc _i] çek-[init _i , proc _i]

Ground	{-In}	GOAL _i , AGENT _i	(6) Misafirler kolonya sür-ün-dü. (7) Ayşe mutfakta ekmek tık-in-dı.	sür-[init, proc, res XP _i] tık-[init, proc, res XP _i]
--------	-------	--	---	--

Despite its similarities to the two other reflexive types, the {-In}-Figure reflexives have a different event structure from the others. Temporal adverbs like *saatlerce* ‘for hours’ indicate continuity that are compatible with {-In}-Figure reflexives (8a). However, they cause ungrammaticality with Ground (8b) and {-II}-Figure reflexives (8c). Thus, unlike {-In}-Figure reflexives, {-II}-Figure and Ground reflexives seem to describe events with a result state.

- (8) a. Bebek yerde saatlerce sür-ün-dü. (The baby dragged herself on the floor for hours)
 b. *Misafirler saatlerce kolonya sür-ün-dü. (Guests applied cologne on themselves for hours)
 c. *Çocuk yarışmadan saatlerce çek-il-di. (The child withdrew from the competition for hours)

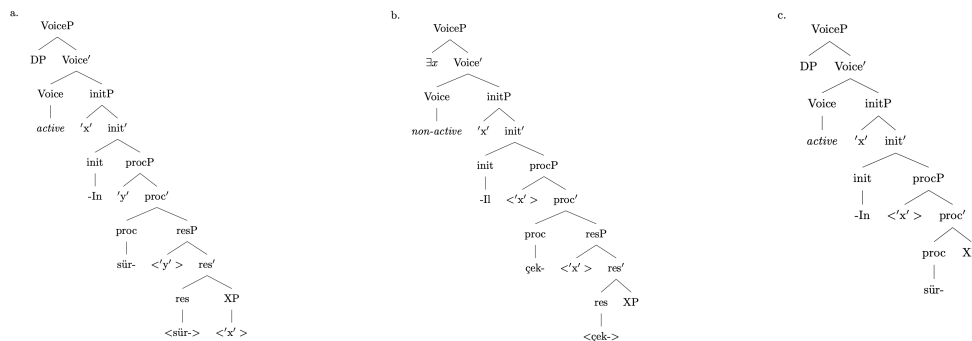
Ground and {-In}-Figure reflexives can undergo passivization and causativization (9b-c). This suggests an Active Voice-head for both {-In} reflexives. For {-II}-Figure reflexives, while passivization is possible, causativization results in ungrammaticality (9a). Thus, another analysis is required for {-II}-Figure reflexives, as causer and agent of the event appear to be distinct:

- (9) a. Yoldan çek-il-in-di./*Polis yayaları yoldan çek-il-dir-di.
 b. Elbiseler giy-in-il-di / Anne bebeği elbise giy-in-dir-di.
 c. Ekmek almaktan çek-in-il-di./ Satıcının tavrı müşteriyi ekmek almaktan çek-in-dir-di.

4. Analysis based on Ramchand (2008)

The composite construction of participants renders Ramchand’s model ideal for Turkish reflexives. The verbs contain three participants: initiator, undergoer, and resultee, organized within a three-layer event projection. The {-In}-Figure reflexive, lacking a result state, is illustrated in (10c). Ground reflexives share the same causer and initiator (10a), as the causer and initiator can be distinct agents in this model. {-II}-Figure reflexives, identified by a Nonactive Voice-head, signify an indirect causation, thereby blocking the causative morpheme (10b). However, the initiator still allows for passivization (9a).

(10)¹



¹ The verbs *sür-ün*, *çek-il* and *sür-ün* in the examples (6), (2) and (4) are shown respectively.