Accusative case in Turkish and Uyghur and the articulation of the verbal field *

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1. Introduction

This paper concerns two aspects of accusative case assignment in Turkish and Uyghur: case assignment in impersonal constructions and differential object marking (DOM) patterns. While both aspects have received extensive study in syntactic theory (both with respect to Turkic and in general), these two phenomena have generally been thought to be largely independent of one another. However, in this paper I identify a correlation regarding variation between these two phenomena that indicates, I argue, their interrelation.

The empirical starting point for this paper is two points of variation observed across two ACC-case related phenomena in Turkish and Uyghur. The first point concerns ACC-case assignment in impersonal constructions. In Turkish impersonals, objects cannot surface with ACC-case. But in Uyghur they must. The second point concerns DOM patterns. Turkish exhibits a typical DOM pattern, where objects marked with ACC-case must uniformly be interpreted as specific. But in Uyghur, ACC-case does not strictly correlate with specificity. In Uyghur, a DOM pattern emerges where ACC-case correlates with specificity only when the object surfaces in certain positions in the clause.

I advance the proposal that these two points of variation are not coincidental but, rather, are both reflexes of the same underlying point of syntactic variation. Specifically, I will argue that Uyghur's verbal field involves an additional functional projection that is absent in Turkish. Further, this difference in functional structure is what underlies the variation observed regarding the distribution of ACC-case in impersonal and DOM patterns. Thus, due to a minimal difference in the composition of Turkish and Uyghur's functional sequences, significant variation is observed for two otherwise seemingly unrelated phenomena.

2.   The data

2.1   The impersonal in Uyghur and Turkish

As shown below, both Turkish (1) and Uyghur (2) exhibit a NOM-ACC case system where the subject is unmarked (i.e. NOM) and the direct object is marked with accusative case morphology (-*(y)I* for Turkish (Göksel and Kerslake 2004); -*ni* for Uyghur (Tömür 2003).[1]

(1)   Ali kitab-ı   hızlı   oku-du.
        Ali book-ACC quickly read-PST.3SG
        'Ali read the book quickly.'   (Legate et al. 2020:772)

(2)   Nilufar polu-ni   ye-di.
        Nilufar pilaf-ACC eat-PST.3SG
        'Nilufar ate the pilaf.'

In both Turkish and Uyghur, verbs may be marked with a 'passive' suffix, -*Il/(I)n* and -*il/in* respectively, which is a syncretic morpheme marking both passives and impersonals (for Turkish: Göksel and Kerslake 2004; for Uyghur: Abdurusul and Lianhua 2018). In Turkish passives (3), the verb is marked with the suffix -*Il/(I)n* and the logical subject is demoted. Further, the logical object is promoted to grammatical subject and cannot surface with ACC-case and must be unmarked (Babby 1981, Knecht 1985, Legate et al. 2020, *i.a.*). As (4) shows, Uyghur passives exhibit the same pattern where the verb is marked with -*il/in*, the logical subject is absent, and the logical object is unmarked.

(3)   Kitab-(*ı) hızlı   oku-**n**-du.
        book-ACC quickly read-PASS-PST.3SG
        'The book was read quickly.'   (Legate et al. 2020:772)

(4)   Polu-(*ni) ye-**yil**-di.
        pilaf-ACC eat-PASS-PST.3SG
        'The pilaf was eaten.'

In Turkish impersonals, a pattern similar to the passive emerges. As shown in (5a), the verb is marked with the suffix -*Il/(I)n*-, and the subject is absent. Further, the object cannot bear ACC-case (as with the passive), as (5b) shows.

(5)   a.   Hızlı   kitap oku-**n**-ur.
               quickly book read-IMP-AOR
               'One does book-reading quickly.'
        b.   *Bu kitab-ı   hızlı   oku-**n**-ur.
               this book-ACC quickly read-IMP-AOR
               'One reads this book quickly.'   (Legate et al. 2020:775,790)

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[1]In both Turkish and Uyghur I omit NOM (-∅) from glosses.

In Uyghur, impersonal constructions pattern similarly to Turkish but with a key difference. As shown in (6), in impersonals the verb is marked with the morpheme *-il/in* (as with the passive) and the subject is absent (as with Turkish). But in Uyghur the object must be marked with ACC-case, as in (6) (cf. (5b)) (Johanson 1998).

(6)   Polu-*(ni) ye-**yil**-idu.
        pilaf-ACC eat-IMP-NPST.3SG
        'One eats the pilaf.'

Although contrasting with respect to the presence/absence of ACC-case, impersonal constructions in Turkish and Uyghur appear to be otherwise highly similar. Importantly, in both Turkish and Uyghur, diagnostics indicate that impersonal constructions involve the projection of a covert impersonal pronoun as logical subject, which distinguishes them from passive constructions that involve genuine argument demotion of the logical subject.

In Turkish (7a) and Uyghur (8a), intransitive predicates resists passivization. Intransitive predicates, however, may participate in impersonals, as in (7b) and (8b), respectively.

(7)   a. *Bu göl-de   insan-lar tarafından boğul-un-ur.
            this lake-LOC person-PL by   drown-PASS-AOR
            'It can be drowned in this lake by people.'
        b. Bu göl-de   boğul-un-ur.
            this lake-LOC drown-IMP-AOR
            'One can drown in this lake.'   (Özsoy 2009:263)

(8)   a. *Muz-da adem-ler   täripidin chüsh-il-di.
            ice-LOC person-PL by   fall-PASS-PST.3SG
            'It was fallen on the ice by people.'
        b. Muz-da chüsh-il-idu.
            ice-LOC fall-IMP-NPST.3SG
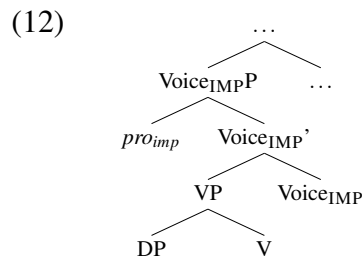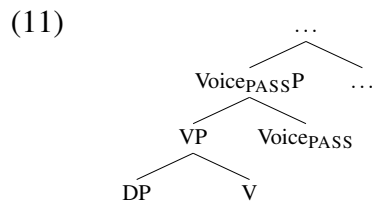   'One falls on ice.'

The above split (7a,7b) is expected if passivization requires the demotion of a logical subject and promotion of logical object to grammatical subject, while impersonals involve the projection of a covert impersonal subject. If passivization requires a logical subject to be demoted (and logical object to be promoted), then predicates which lack both cannot passivize, i.e. intransitives (7a,8a) (Perlmutter and Postal 1977, Postal 1986, *i.a.*). Conversely, if impersonals do not involve logical subject demotion and object promotion but the projection of a covert impersonal subject, such constructions are expected to be possible with intransitive predicates, i.e. (7b,8b).

Additional diagnostics further indicate that both Turkish and Uyghur impersonal constructions involve the projection of a covert impersonal subject (while passives do not). In Turkish, while passive constructions allow for agent reintroduction *via* by-phrases (9a); impersonals uniformly resist by-phrase agent reintroduction (9b) (Özsoy 2009, Legate et al. 2020). The same facts are observed in Uyghur, as shown in (10a,10b).

(9) a. Kitap Ali tarafından hızlı   oku-**n**-du.
        book Ali by   quickly read-PASS-3SG
        'The book was read quickly by Ali.'
    b. *Ali tarafından hızlı   kitap oku-**n**-du.
        Ali by   quickly book read-IMP-AOR
        'Book-reading was done quickly by Ali.'   (Legate et al. 2020:772,773)

(10) a. Xet   Adil täripidin yëz-il-di.
        letter Adil by   write-PASS-PST.3SG
        'The letter was written by Adil'
    b. *Xet-ni   Adil täripidin yëz-il-di.
        letter-ACC Adil by   write-IMP-PST.3SG
        'The letter was written by Adil.'

Thus, I take the impossibility of agent reintroduction *via* by-phrases in both Turkish and Uyghur impersonals (9b,10b) (but not passives (9a,10a)) as further indicating the presence of a covert logical subject in impersonals for both Turkish and Uyghur.

   In light of the above observations, I conclude that both Turkish and Uyghur passives ((3),(4)) and impersonals ((5a),(6)) instantiate the configurations sketched in (11) and (12), respectively. Turkish and Uyghur passives (11) involve genuine logical subject demotion (and promotion of the logical object to grammatical subject). Turkish and Uyghur impersonals (12) involve the projection of a null impersonal pronoun (pro_{imp}) as logical subject (McCloskey 2007, Legate et al. 2020).

(11)   (12)

                ...   ...
        Voice$_{PASS}$P ...   Voice$_{IMP}$P ...
      VP   Voice$_{PASS}$ pro_{imp} Voice$_{IMP}$'
    DP   V   VP   Voice$_{IMP}$
                                                   DP   V

2.2   Differential Object Marking in Turkish and Uyghur

Both Turkish and Uyghur instantiate a typologically common DOM system where objects high in specificity are marked with ACC-case morphology and non-specific direct objects are unmarked, i.e. lacking ACC-case. As shown below, in Turkish (13) and Uyghur (14) when the object is non-specific, it is unmarked (13a),(14a); when the object is specific it is marked with ACC-case (13b),(14b) (for Turkish see: (Erguvanlı-Taylan 1984, Enç 1991, Kornfilt 2003, *i.a.*); for Uyghur see: Major 2021, *i.a.*)).

(13) a. Ali kitap oku-du.
        Ali book read-PST.3SG
        'Ali read a book/did book-reading.'

    b.   Ali kitab-**ı**   oku-du.
            Ali book-ACC read-PST.3SG
            'Ali read the book.'

(14)   a.   Adil kitap oqu-di.
            Adil book read-PST.3SG
            'Adil read a book/did book-reading.'
    b.   Adil kitab-**ni**   oqu-di.
            Adil book-ACC read-PST.3SG
            'Adil read the book.'

Interestingly, while Turkish and Uyghur pattern alike with respect to DOM patterns for objects that are in clause-medial positions, they diverge with respect to the interpretation of objects which have been dislocated to a clause-initial position (Jenkins 2022, to appear). As shown below in (15) for Turkish, objects may be dislocated, i.e. scrambled, to a clause-initial position. When dislocated, the object is obligatorily marked with ACC-case and must receive a specific interpretation in this position.

(15)   Doktor$_i$-*(u) ben t_i arı-yor-um.
       doctor-ACC   1SG   look.for-PROG-1SG
       'I'm looking for the doctor.'   (Jenkins to appear)

In Uyghur, however, while objects which have been dislocated to a clause-initial position must be marked with ACC-case an obligatorily specific interpretation is no longer enforced in this position (16).

(16)   Mashin$_i$-*(ni) Mehmet t_i xala-ydu.
       car-ACC   Mehmet   want-NPST.3SG
   'Mehmet wants a/the car.'   (Jenkins to appear)

Thus, Uyghur and Turkish show systematic variation regarding ACC-case assignment in two key respects. As §2.1 showed, Turkish disallows ACC-case on objects in impersonals, but Uyghur requires it. In this section, another point of variation was observed. In Turkish, ACC-marked objects are uniformly interpreted as specific. But in Uyghur, ACC-marked objects are interpreted as specific only in certain positions in the clause. In the next section, I will argue that these two points of variation are, in fact, not independent but both are reflexes of the same underlying point of syntactic variation.

3.   Analysis

In this section, I advance the proposal that the two points of variation observed are due to an an underlying minimal difference between Turkish and Uyghur's extended verbal projection. Specifically, that the composition of Uyghur's extended verbal project has an additional functional projection, located between VoiceP and *v*P, that is absent in Turkish.

I show that the presence of this additional functional layer in Uyghur (and its absence in Turkish) accounts for the variation discussed in §2.1 and §2.2.

First, consider the contrast observed regarding ACC-case in impersonals. In Turkish impersonals, objects cannot surface with ACC-case but in in Uyghur impersonals they must. I propose that the impersonal morpheme is hosted by a $\text{Voice}_{\text{IMP}}$ that selects for a complement that lacks an ACC-assigning feature (cf. Legate et al. 2020). Hence, in the case of the Turkish impersonal, $\text{Voice}_{\text{IMP}}$ selects for vP, as in (17). Since, v cannot merge with an [ACC] feature, the object DP will not receive [ACC], and, thus, must be unmarked.[2]

(17)
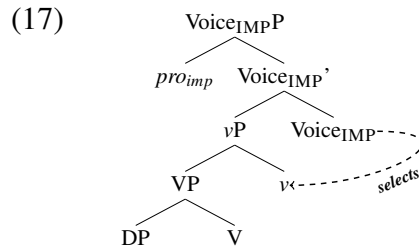
In Uyghur, I propose that $\text{Voice}_{\text{IMP}}$ selects for a complement which does not carry an [ACC]-assigning feature as well. However, I propose that there is an additional functional layer, FP, which is located between vP and VoiceP.[3] Due to the fact that the complement of $\text{Voice}_{\text{IMP}}$ is not vP (as in Turkish), in Uyghur impersonal constructions v may merge into the structure with an [ACC] feature and, thus, is able to value the object DP's [uK] feature, as illustrated in (18).

(18)
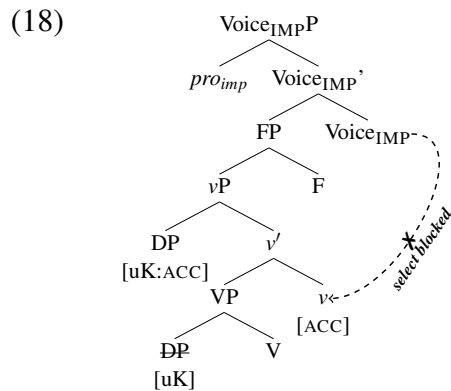
Thus, due to the presence of this additional functional layer, FP, ACC-marking of the object is possible in Uyghur impersonals. Conversely, due to the absence of this functional layer in Turkish, ACC-marking is impossible in impersonals.

Regarding the absence of ACC-case in both Turkish and Uyghur passives, i.e. (3,4), I suggest that $\text{Voice}_{\text{PASS}}$ selects for a complement that lacks an ACC-assigning feature as

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[2]Regarding the licensing of the object DP in (17) I assume that object DPs can enter the derivation without a [uK] and that such objects are licensed *via* pseudo-incorporation with V (Massam 2001, *i.a.*)

[3]See Jenkins to appear, for independent evidence that the Uyghur extended verbal projection involves a functional projection immediately above vP, which is not present in Turkish.

well. In Turkish, Voice$_{PASS}$ selects for a v that lacks [ACC] (as with Voice$_{IMP}$). In Uyghur, while Voice$_{PASS}$ cannot directly select for a non-ACC assigning v (due to the presence of FP), I suggest that such derivations are anyways excluded due the fact that if the object DP was valued with [uK:ACC] by v, it could not enter into a dependency with T and, thus, not be able to check T's [uϕ] and [EPP] features causing a crash (cf. Chomsky 2001).

For Turkish and Uyghur's DOM patterns, this same difference in functional structure accounts for this variation as well. As was shown, both Uyghur and Turkish instantiate a DOM system where specific (13b,14b) and clause-initial (15,16) objects must be marked with ACC-case. The only difference is that while in Turkish dislocated objects are obligatorily specific (15), Uyghur dislocated objects lose their obligatory specific interpretation in this position (16).

I propose that this difference regarding the interpretation of dislocated ACC-objects in Turkish and Uyghur is due to the same structural difference with ACC-marking in impersonals. Namely, the presence (or absence) of an additional function layer, FP, immediately above vP. Following the proposal developed in Jenkins 2022, to appear, I adopt the hypothesis that v imposes a semantically-based restriction on DPs moving to its Spec, where only DPs that are specific may move to Spec$v$P (I represent this with a ∘SPECIFIC∘ diacritic on v). To implement this, I assume that DPs can optionally bear a [+SPECIFIC] feature and that object DPs can move to Spec$v$P only when they bear [+SPECIFIC].[4] I also adopt the assumption that object DPs must move outside of the VP to receive [ACC] (Torrego 1998, *i.a.*); DPs which remain VP-internal are caseless.

First, consider (13b) and (14b), for Turkish and Uyghur respectively, where the direct object is in clause-medial position. As shown in (19), the DP is base-generated with a [uK] and must raise to Spec$v$P to receive [ACC]. Due to the restriction v imposes on its Spec, the object must be [+SPECIFIC], otherwise the derivation will crash. Thus, DOM objects in both Turkish and Uyghur are uniformly specific when surfacing in a clause-medial position.

(19)
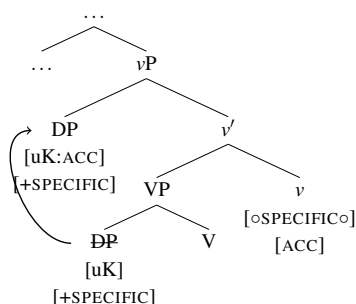
Consider now the constructions where the object has been dislocated to a clause-initial position. For Turkish, dislocated objects must be ACC-marked and obligatorily receive a specific interpretation, as in (15). Assuming that dislocation to a clause-initial position involves movement of the object DP from its VP-internal position to SpecCP, the DP must have Spec$v$P as an intermediate landing site due to the Phase Impenetrability Condition and vP's phasal status (Chomsky 2001). However, due to the restriction that v imposes on DPs

[4]See discussion in: Jenkins 2022, to appear, for how this effect may be derived.

merging to Spec*v*P, only [+SPECIFIC] DPs will be able to have Spec*v*P as an intermediate landing site. Thus, only [+SPECIFIC] DPs may move to a position above *v*P, i.e. SpecCP. The derivation is sketched below in (20).

(20)
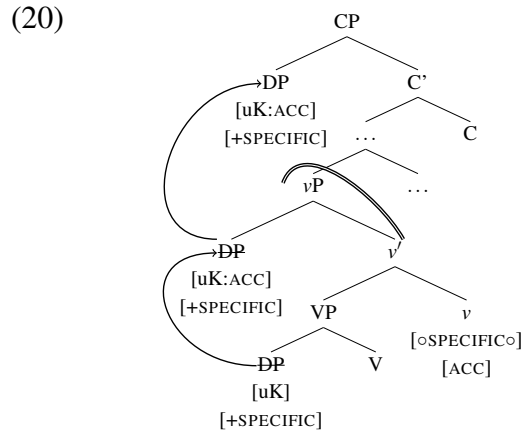
I now turn to the Uyghur DOM pattern. As shown in (16), while objects must be marked with ACC-case morphology when undergoing movement to a clause-initial position they do not have an obligatorily specific interpretation in this position (unlike Turkish (15)). Following Jenkins 2022, to appear, I adopt the analysis that the absence of an obligatory specific interpretation is due the presence of the additional functional projection in Uyghur. Specifically, that the presence of this functional projection, FP, in Uyghur extends the phase boundary above *v*P to FP (for discussion of such contextual approaches to phases see: Bobaljik and Wurmbrand 2005, Bošković 2014, *i.a.*).[5] Thus, for Uyghur, object DPs undergoing movement to the clause periphery (e.g. (16)) are not required to move to Spec*v*P as an intermediate landing site and instead move to SpecFP, which is the phase edge. Thus, since such objects do not move to Spec*v*P no specific-based restriction is imposed. The derivation is sketched below in (21).

(21)

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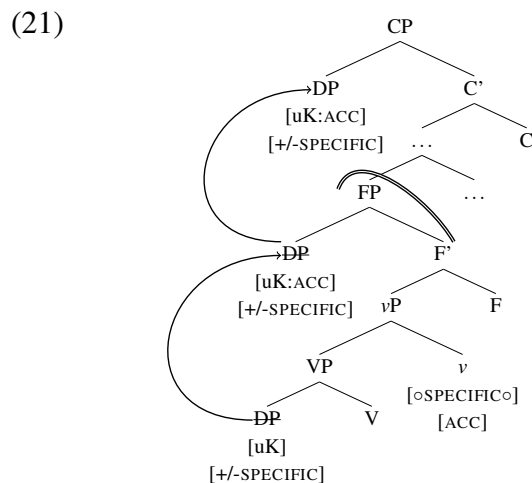
[5]For further discussion of phasal domains as relating to Turkish and Uyghur's extended verbal projection see: Jenkins to appear.

Thus, due to the presence of this additional functional layer, FP, specificity-related DOM effects are not induced for dislocated objects in Uyghur (as they are in Turkish).

To summarize, in this section I have shown that two seemingly unrelated points of variation regarding ACC-case assignment in Turkish and Uyghur are due to the same variation with respect to composition of those language's functional sequence. Specifically, the presence of an additional functional projection between VoiceP and *v*P in Uyghur, which is absent in Turkish, is what underlies the differences exhibited regarding the distribution of ACC-case in impersonals and the interpretation of DOM objects.

4.   Conclusion

This paper examined two instances of variation regarding ACC-case assignment in Turkish and Uyghur: distribution of ACC-case in impersonals and DOM patterns. While initially these aspects of ACC-case assignment appeared to be seemingly independent, I showed that these two instances of variation systematically correlate with each other. I proposed that the variation observed in both cases between Turkish and Uyghur was due to the same underlying point of minimal structural variation. Specifically, that the Uyghur verbal field involves an additional functional projection between VoiceP and *v*P, which is absent in Turkish. Further, I argued that the presence/absence of this additional functional projection (and its interaction with other mechanisms, i.e. selection, phase boundaries, successive cyclic movement) is what underlies the variation observed in Uyghur and Turkish. While the exact identity of this projection is left open for future work, I have shown how this hypothesized minimal difference in Turkish and Uyghur's functional sequence not only accounts for the aforementioned variation but, importantly, illuminates the interrelation between two otherwise seemingly independent phenomena.[6]

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[6]As discussed in Sugar 2019, Uyghur's functional sequence appears to involve a low AspP below VoiceP. I tentatively suggest that the presence of this lower AspP may, in fact, be connected to the presence of FP in Uyghur and its absence in Turkish. I leave this issue to future work.

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