

CAUSATIVE VOICE

by Seda Sürel

INTRODUCTION

The causative voice in Turkish is used to indicate that the subject causes another person or entity to perform an action, rather than performing the action directly.

Causative constructions modify the argument structure of the verb by introducing a new participant responsible for initiating the action.

1. Function

The causative voice is used to express:

- causing someone to do something,
- arranging for an action to be done,
- indirect control over an event.

The subject of the causative verb is the causer, while the person who performs the action is the causee.

2. Forms

Turkish forms causatives through derivational suffixes attached to the verb stem.

Main causative suffix groups:

- -Dlr → dır / dir / dur / dür
- -Tlr → tır / tir / tur / tür
- -t
- -lr → ır / ir / ur / ür

The choice of suffix depends on phonological structure and lexical patterns of the verb.

3. Morphology

Causative suffixes attach directly to the verb stem before tense, aspect, or mood markers.

a. Causative forms with -Dlr / -Tlr

This group includes the most productive causative forms at B1 level.

Consonant Assimilation Rule (Mandatory):

When the verb stem ends in a voiceless consonant

(f, s, t, k, ç, ş, h, p),

the causative suffix -Dlr surfaces as -Tlr.

This is due to consonant assimilation.

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Examples:

- çalış- → çalıştır-
- koş- → koştur-
- aç- → açtır-
- yap- → yaptır-

If the verb stem ends in a voiced consonant or vowel, the suffix appears as –Dlr.

Examples:

- yaz- → yazdır-
- sil- → sildir-
- sev- → sevdir-

b. Causative forms with –t

This suffix is commonly observed with certain intransitive verbs, especially those ending in vowels or sonorant consonants.

Examples:

- uyu- → uyut-
- otur- → oturt-

c. Causative forms with –lr

This group appears frequently with short, often monosyllabic verbs and shows limited predictability.

Examples:

- kaç- → kaçır-
- düş- → düşür-

Lexical and Irregular Causatives

Some verbs historically contain causative meaning but no longer follow a transparent, productive pattern.

Examples:

- gel- → getir-
- gör- → göster-

Explanation:

In these cases, the causative meaning is lexical rather than morphologically productive.

For example, getirmek does not mean “to cause someone to come” through a regular causative suffix; it functions as an independent verb meaning “to bring.”

Similarly, göstermek functions as an independent verb meaning “to show,” not as a regularly derived causative of görmek.

These forms should be learned as fixed lexical items, not generated through suffix rules.

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4. Structural Guide (Step by Step)

Active structure:

- Ali kapıyı açtı.
- (Ali opened the door.)

Causative structure:

- Ali kapıyı açtırdı.
- (Ali made someone open the door.)

The causative verb introduces a new participant responsible for causing the action.

5. Syntax

Causative constructions affect object marking.

If the original verb is intransitive, the causee takes the Accusative case (–(y)I).

- Çocuğu koşturdu.
- (He made the child run.)

If the original verb is transitive, the causee typically takes the Dative case (–(y)A).

- Berbere saçımı kestirdim.
- (I had my hair cut by the barber.)

In many cases, the causee may also be omitted when it is contextually understood.

6. Usage

Causative voice is commonly used to express:

- indirect actions,
- services performed by others,
- delegated responsibility.

It is frequent in everyday speech, especially with actions involving services or arrangements.

Examples

- Arabayı tamir ettirdim.
- (I had the car repaired.)
- Çocuğa ödevini yaptırdı.
- (She made the child do his homework.)
- Saçımı kestirdim.
- (I had my hair cut.)
- Öğrencileri sınıfa toplattı.
- (He made someone gather the students into the classroom.)

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Notes

- Causative suffixes are derivational and change the argument structure of the verb.
- The suffix –Dlr appears as –Tlr after voiceless consonants due to consonant assimilation.
- Some causative meanings are lexicalized and cannot be derived productively.
- Case marking of the causee depends on whether the original verb is transitive or intransitive.