

Impersonal Verbs in Italic: Their Development from an Indo-European Perspective

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Impersonal verbs, which are attested in all (early) Indo-European languages, cover a wide range of expressions, varying—to some extent—in meaning and form. Despite this apparent variation they share a number of typical characteristics. Independently from the choice of verb or the nature of the other elements involved, they include third singular forms of the verb. Moreover, they typically convey one of three meanings: (I) meteorological conditions; (II) emotional and physical experience; and (III) modal values.

Well represented in the Italic branch, impersonal verbs underwent major changes in later stages but not all types were equally affected. Despite a few new constructions conveying weather conditions in late Latin, for example, the patterns of this type of impersonal verb remained the same. Conversely, impersonal verbs expressing emotional and physical experience changed dramatically. Relating these changes to the development that took place in verbs that convey modality and pointing out parallels in other Indo-European languages, I argue that the development of impersonal verbs in Italic was not an arbitrary or isolated phenomenon.

The impersonal verb represents a complex topic in linguistic research, not only because it is an inherently difficult subject, but also because it is often neglected in grammars of individual languages. This relative lack of attention to the topic, which may be closely related to its complexity, can even be observed in Leumann and Hofmann's grammar of Latin—one of the best analyzed languages in the world—where impersonal verbs, instead of being discussed in a separate chapter, are integrated in a section of syntax that treats the vocative, the imperative, and similar elements that may form a clause on their own (1965:414-19). In grammars of other Indo-European or non-Indo-European languages—which are less well analyzed—it is even more difficult to find systematic overviews of data let alone discussions about, or even clarifying remarks

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on, impersonal verbs. In addition, remarks are often scattered throughout these works. This situation makes any comparative analysis complicated.

The general lack of attention to impersonal verbs seems to have become more serious recently, as for example reference to Sihler's recent *Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin* (1995) reveals: while impersonal verbs are not incorporated in the subject index, only a few of them are included in the word index. They are also generally mentioned in the text to illustrate specific phonological processes. The situation was slightly better at the turn of the century: the topic was discussed in the important handbooks of Indo-European linguistics, where it was integrated in the section of syntax (see for example Delbrück 1900:23 et seq. or Brugmann 1925:17-41). In addition early this century impersonal constructions captured the attention of general linguists as well, such as Hermann Paul (1937 [1920]) or the Indo-Europeanist Havers (1931), who in a general treatise on the background of syntactic phenomena related impersonal verbs to the psychology of what he considered "the primitive mind." Yet since the second half of this century, the topic is no longer the focus of systematic analyses or general discussions. Only a few studies that analyze an aspect of the impersonal verb in one of the daughter languages may be found (e.g. Seeffranz-Montag 1995; for studies on English, see e.g. Mitchell 1990). It may have been tacitly assumed that everything noteworthy had been said about the topic and that despite earlier attempts the impersonal verb remained a capricious phenomenon that was difficult to account for.

Yet as Karl Horst Schmidt pointed out, "new contributions" to the field may either come from new material or reinterpretation of material that was already available (1992:35-6;49 et seq.). Accordingly the discovery of cuneiform tablets in Anatolia at the beginning of this century (1906-1909), the subsequent identification of the texts as being Indo-European (1915) and the identification of its principal phonological characteristics, the laryngeals, "modified previous assumptions on the dialect division and on the phonology of the protolanguage" (Lehmann 1993:18). The reinterpretation, on the other hand, of lexical, morphological, and syntactic evidence brought about the recent identification of early Proto-Indo-European as an active language (see Gamkrelidze and

Ivanov [1984;1995], Klimov [1977], Lehmann [1989; 1990a; 1993], and Schmidt [1979]). In a series of publications Klimov has demonstrated the existence of an independent type of language—the active language—whose principal characteristic is the lack of transitivity (e.g. 1977). The absence of transitivity as a grammatical feature distinguishes active languages from ergative and nominative languages: instead active languages distinguish between active and inactive verbs and nouns. In line with this basic feature, they include a number of related characteristics, such as the opposition alienable vs. inalienable possession or the lack of *verba habendi* (cf. Klimov 1977). On the basis of the occurrence of similar features in Proto-Indo-European, Gamkrelidze and Ivanov (1984), Lehmann (1989; 1990), and Schmidt (1979) put forth and elaborated the hypothesis that Proto-Indo-European was active in a very early stage. It is argued that when Proto-Indo-European subsequently developed transitivity, residues of the earlier patterns survived, such as *mihi est* constructions, which in the absence of a verb 'have' for a long time expressed possession.

Another characteristic of active languages is the presence of impersonal verbs. As a result, impersonal verbs have again become a field of interest as the recent article on impersonal verbs by Lehmann (1991) illustrates. Lehmann examined a specific type of impersonal verb in Indo-European, the ones in *-r*, whose formation, it is argued, is related to specific characteristics in the morphology of active languages (1991). The present article will focus on another type of impersonal verb, which was widely spread in Indo-European languages and whose changes in the Italic branch may account for characteristics of impersonal verbs in Indo-European in general.

1 Impersonal verbs: aim of the paper

Analysis of impersonal verbs is complex, not only because of the bibliographical problems mentioned above, but also because the topic itself is tangled. In the Indo-European languages alone, for example, the data may seem to be arbitrary at first glance: impersonal verbs, which are in fact lexical elements, convey a variety of meanings and their etymology lacks consistency cross-linguistically as well as language internally. Impersonal verbs in the various languages rarely share the same root. It is almost impossible to trace back the etymology of a

given impersonal verb to a Proto-Indo-European root for an impersonal verb. Yet Indo-European impersonal verbs typically display a specific type of structure and convey a coherent set of meanings (see section 2 of this paper). In addition their development is not arbitrary, but fits other important patterns of language change in Indo-European. Impersonal verbs therefore call for a syntactic analysis from an Indo-European perspective.

This paper focuses on Italic, which had a large number of impersonal verbs. In addition the well-documented history of Latin shows an important shift, as the following examples illustrate:

Latin <i>me pudet</i> > me-Acc. ashamed-3sg. 'I am ashamed' <i>mihi licet</i> me-Dat. allow-3sg.	French (a) <i>j'ai honte</i> I-Subj.-have-1sg shame-Obj. (b) <i>j'ai le droit</i> I-Subj.-have-1sg the right-Obj. (c) <i>il m'est permis</i> it-Subj. me-Dat.-be-3sg. allowed-PfPrt. 'I am allowed'
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or:

These examples illustrate that the Latin impersonal verb has been replaced over time by structures of the type (a) and (b), featuring a subject-Nominative and a verb, *avoir* 'have,' which displays transitive syntax and which agrees in person and number with the subject. The replacement of impersonal verbs by verbs that combine with a nominative subject has been consistent. Yet French also includes structures of type (c), *il m'est permis ...*, as well as impersonal weather verbs, as the following example shows, cf.:

Latin <i>pluit</i>	>	French <i>il pleut</i> (cf. Italian <i>piove</i> , or Spanish <i>llueve</i>)
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Consequently changes have taken place over time in the category of impersonal verbs that may seem inconsistent at face value. This paper attempts to demonstrate that the category of impersonal verbs in Indo-European, which reflects an important aspect of early Proto-Indo-European syntax,

underwent a systematic change that is in line with the syntactic development in Indo-European languages.

The history of Indo-European languages is characterized by the ever increasing spreading of transitive clause structures that correspond to nominative typology. As evidence from the daughter languages shows, Proto-Indo-European was a nominative language before it split up, displaying sentences of the type subject-Nominative, direct object-Accusative, and a finite verb that agrees with the subject in number and person. Yet a number of structures, such as constructions with a gerundive in Latin, did not fit this pattern, as was demonstrated earlier (Bauer 1993). It is striking however, that these structures over time came to be replaced by structures characterized by nominative syntax (cf. Bauer 1993 and 1994). Similarly, the aim of this paper is to demonstrate that a large group of impersonal verbs came to be replaced by structures that fit nominative typology.

The shift that affects impersonal verbs in Indo-European is slow, however, which accounts for the high occurrence of these verbs in a number of Indo-European languages, such as Modern German, where instances of the type *es gefällt mir* 'I like,' are common, or—to a lesser degree—French where the examples mentioned above are found.

2 Types of impersonal verbs in Indo-European

The impersonal verb in Indo-European languages represents a wide range of expressions, varying—to some extent—in form and meaning. Despite this apparent variety these expressions share a structural characteristic: independently from the choice of verb or the nature of the other elements involved (nominal, pronominal, adjectival), "the forms of impersonals are third singular present indicatives" (Lehmann 1991:33). This very broad definition presents the important advantage of including impersonal verbs of the type of Latin *pluit* as well as French *il pleut*. The presence, in later forms, of a pronominal element in subject position (see also, for example German, *es regnet* or Modern English *it is raining* vs. the Gothic equivalent *riḡneip* without this element, or OHG (*eʒ*) *snīwit* vs. MHG *eʒ sniet*) does not interfere with the notion of impersonal verb itself. The emergence of these elements is the result of the comprehensive shift in Indo-European from left to right-branching structures (or in a more common terminology from OV to VO structures).

This shift not only affected syntactic phrases but also morphological structures (see for these changes Lehmann 1972, 1973; Bauer 1987, 1995). In morphology the structures inherited from Proto-Indo-European, in which a lexical element was followed by the grammatical element (e.g. Latin *leg-ibus* 'law-Abl.pl' 'with laws'), came to be replaced by right-branching structures, where the grammatical element comes first and is followed by the lexical one, for example prepositional phrases (cf. French [*avec [des lois]*]). While case endings in nouns gave way to prepositions, which precede the noun, mood or aspect in verbs came to be expressed by preposed auxiliaries instead of suffixes, and so forth. This comprehensive development also includes the replacement of verb endings referring to grammatical person by preceding subject personal pronouns, cf.

Latin	Old French	Modern French
<i>laudo</i>	> <i>loe</i>	> <i>je loue</i>
praise-1sg-Ind.	praise-1sg-Ind.	I-Subj. praise-1/3Sg.
'I praise'		

In Modern French—which includes obligatory subject pronouns in the absence of a nominal subject—person distinction in most of the verbs is limited to the first and second plural forms (cf. *-ons* [first person plural] as in (*nous*) *chantons* 'we sing' and *-ez* [second person plural] as in (*vous*) *chantez* 'you [plural] sing'). The other forms are acoustically the same, despite differences in orthography (cf. *je loue* and *tu loues*, whose pronunciation is identical). The emergence of the pronominal subject in French took place in the Old and Middle French period, but has not yet occurred in Italian, which explains why we find *il me plaît* in French but *mi piace* in Italian (< Latin *mihi placet*). This interpretation further supports Brugmann's earlier conclusion (1917) that *il* in this context is a "Scheinsubjekt" (cf. also Löfstedt 1965-66:100-101).

Impersonal verbs are found in all Indo-European languages, but their number and distribution vary from language to language. In Germanic, Italic and Slavic languages the impersonal verb is well represented, but it is much less widespread in Greek and Sanskrit. Yet in earlier stages of each of these languages, impersonal verbs were better represented. Despite their unbalanced distribution it is possible to classify impersonal verbs in each language into three categories on the

basis of their meaning as was done earlier by Delbrück (1900: 23 et seq.), Brugmann (1925:17-41), Wackernagel (1926:113-19), and more recently by Lehmann (1991). The categories are briefly mentioned in the following paragraphs:

Category I: impersonal verbs indicating weather conditions and natural events, such as:

Sskt.	<i>várṣati</i>	'it is raining'
Greek	(<i>Ζεῦς</i>) <i>ῥεῖ</i>	'it is raining'
Latin	<i>pluit</i>	'it is raining'
Ru.	<i>morózit</i>	'it is freezing'

Category II: impersonal verbs referring to emotional, physical, and mental state, cf.

Greek	<i>μέλει μοί</i>	'I care'
Latin	<i>me pudet</i>	'I am ashamed'
Germ.	<i>es jücht mich/mir</i>	'it itches me'
OHG	<i>mir anget</i>	'I am afraid'

Category III: impersonal verbs that convey modality, expressing necessity, possibility, and so forth:

Latin	<i>mihi licet</i>	'I am allowed'
	<i>necesse est</i>	'it is necessary'
Greek	<i>δεῖ με</i>	'I have to'
Ru.	<i>podobáet</i>	'it is appropriate'

These three categories cover a variety of meanings. Yet impersonal verbs in Indo-European always convey one of the three basic meanings mentioned here. In addition, despite lexical variety, the structural patterns of these verbs are basically the same across the daughter languages (see also sections 3 and 4 of this paper). Consequently, in spite of the lack of etymological correspondences, it may be assumed that impersonal verbs represent a **pattern** that was inherited from the protolanguage: they include the same type of structure across the individual daughter languages and convey the same three categories of meaning.

Accordingly the consistent patterns that are found in the daughter languages provide evidence for the assumption that Proto-Indo-European displayed all three categories of impersonal verbs, conveying weather conditions, emotional and physical state, and modal values. Subsequently when the protolanguage split up, the daughter languages gradually lost

their impersonal verbs. This development took place more quickly in some languages than in others, which accounts for the somewhat inconsistent distribution patterns across the Indo-European languages.

The following sections analyze impersonal verbs of category II and III in Latin and their subsequent development. It will be argued that the evolution which took place in Latin was not arbitrary nor limited to the Italic branch. This evolution may in fact account for the distribution patterns of impersonal verbs across the individual daughter languages. Yet first two other types of impersonal verbs are briefly discussed in the next section, weather verbs and the formations in *-r*, which so far have only been mentioned briefly.

3 Impersonal weather verbs and impersonal forms in *-r*

The group of verb forms in *-r* was very common in Italic, cf. Latin *caletur* 'it is warm,' *itur* 'one goes,' *curritur* 'one is running,' *dicitur* 'it is said,' Umbrian *ier* 'one ought to go' (*Iguvian Tables*, VI B 54), *hertur* 'it is proper,' (*Iguvian Tables*, IIa 40), or Oscan *sakarater* 'one carries out a sacrifice' (*Tablet of Agnone*, 21; Buck 1974:213; 254). These forms in *-r*, which we also find in Celtic, originally convey impersonal meanings and are residues of an earlier stage of language (see Zimmer 1890; Ernout 1908-09; Lehmann 1991). The examples given here show that a number of the forms are pure impersonals (e.g., Latin *caletur*, or Umbrian *hertur*), whereas others, especially in Latin, came to have the value of indefinites, as the following example also illustrates:

in totis aedibus ... bibitur estur quasi in ... (Pl. *Poen.* 834-5)
 in entire-Abl.pl. house-Abl. drink-Imp. eat-Imp. as in ...
 'in this entire house one drinks and eats as in ...'

The indefinite value was secondary. Earlier Ernout and Thomas pointed out that the forms in *-tur*, which convey the verbal concept independently from a subject, easily became indefinites (1964:144). The subsequent development of these formations further confirms this observation (see *infra*).

The later development does not interfere with the originality of the forms in *-r*, nor with their original value. As is well-known, the passive in Indo-European languages was late and developed in the individual dialects, which accounts for the variation in its morphological formation. The suffix *-r*, which is the marker of the passive in Italic and Celtic and the medio-

passive in Hittite (-*n*), originally had a different function: before being the morphological marker of the passive, the suffix -*r* was used in impersonal verb forms. Its function therefore changed fundamentally as is illustrated in the type of verbs it combined with: as a passive suffix it combined exclusively with transitive verbs, whereas as an impersonal suffix it combined also with intransitive verbs (see the examples mentioned earlier, *itur* 'one goes,' or *curritur* 'one runs').

While the impersonal forms in -*r* are attested in Italic and Celtic, the later passive forms in -*r* are found "in peripheral dialects in addition to its maintenance in Hittite" (Lehmann 1991:36): Italic, Celtic, Tocharian, and Phrygian. In other dialects, such as Germanic, Slavic and Baltic, it was completely lost (for a discussion of these forms in the individual dialects, see Lehmann [1991:36-37]). Zimmer (1890) identified these forms in Celtic and Italic as original impersonals. Subsequently, Ernout further supported Zimmer's hypothesis with ample evidence from Latin, Oscan, and Umbrian and the development of these forms in the various Celtic dialects (1908-09), concluding that Proto-Indo-European might have had a verbal form in -*r* conveying an impersonal: "peut-être y a-t-il eu en indo-européen une forme en -*r* caractérisant l'impersonnel" (Ernout 1908-09:277; see also Meillet and Vendryes 1924:330-31). Recently Lehmann, accepting the earlier interpretations of Zimmer and Ernout suggested that "-*r* was the characteristic ending of impersonals at the active stage of Proto-Indo-European" (1991:35). He supports his view by relating the inflectional formation in -*r* to other morphological processes that are typical of an active language system. On the basis of marking patterns in verbs and nouns, where the inactive class is indicated by -*r* (cf. Greek *πῦρ* referring to inanimate fire as opposed to Sanskrit animate *Agni* 'god of fire, [animate] fire'), and assuming that sub-classification and its marking includes verbs as well as nouns, Lehmann concludes that "-*r* was a marker of inactive state" and "the distinctive marker for the subclass of impersonals during the active period of Proto-Indo-European" (1991:35-6).

These forms in -*r*, despite their productivity in Latin as Ernout's ample evidence suggests (including all tenses, verbal aspect and transitive and intransitive verbs), were replaced in later periods by structures displaying a subject-Nominative, as in:

Latin	<i>dicitur</i>	>	French	<i>on</i>		<i>dit</i>
	say-Impers.			one-Subj.		say-3sg.
	'it is said'					

or by passive expressions such as

Latin	<i>dicitur</i>	>	French	<i>il</i>		<i>est</i>		<i>dit</i>
	say-Impers.			it-Subj.		be-3sg.		say-PfPrt
	'it is said'							

These examples show that the structures though no longer impersonal are indefinite in that the grammatical subject is non-referential as in the unspecified *on dit* (cf. the German equivalent *man sagt*), or depersonified as in the passive, see French *il est dit* or German *es wird gesagt*.

Despite their originality, the forms in *-r* are less widespread than impersonal verbs conveying weather conditions, which are attested in all Indo-European languages. Impersonal verbs that convey weather conditions form as it were a group on their own as well: they represent the most frequent and most consistent type of impersonal verb and survive in all Indo-European languages. Moreover, many languages share the same roots. There is, however, only one impersonal verb whose Proto-Indo-European etymon can be reconstructed with certainty, which is the verb for 'snowing' (< **sneyg*^{wh}-). Its original meaning was 'snowing' and its reflexes are found in many daughter languages. Other impersonal weather verbs as well present various roots cross-linguistically, such as the verb for 'raining' with six different roots in the Indo-European languages. One of these, Proto-Indo-European **seu-*, has impersonal reflexes in Greek (*ἕει* 'it is raining'), but its extended stem occurs as a plain verb in Latin, for example, where *sugo* means 'suck' (*sucus* 'juice') (Pokorny 1959:912). Yet despite this variety, the roots in question all have the same basic meaning, either nominal 'juice, water' or verbal 'pour, flow.' Consequently the roots of impersonal weather verbs are restricted in number and they basically cover the same semantic field.

The variety of roots of impersonal weather verbs that is found in the daughter languages is the result of the widespread and easy lexical change that occurs in this category. This observation does not imply that verbs referring to weather conditions did not have a common Proto-Indo-European etymon. The evidence that is necessary for their reconstruction simply no longer exists because lexical change is common in

this type of structure. The lexical inconsistencies may be related to the Indo-European migrations, the associated change of location and climatological conditions, as well as changes in climatological conditions over time.

The binding factor of impersonal verbs referring to weather conditions is not only the semantic field but also the syntactic context. In contrast to impersonal verbs of categories II and III, impersonal weather verbs typically do not feature argument structure. Weather verbs are lexical elements that can be found only as third person singular forms and that—originally at least—typically do not combine with an oblique case or an accusative. The occurrence of a subject-Nominative—predominantly referring to a deity—in combination with a weather verb has long been a matter of discussion (see e.g. Delbrück [1888 and 1900], Brugmann [1925:24], Paul [1937:130 et seq.], Meillet [1964:244], Hirt [1937], or Löfstedt [1965-66:92]).

While this matter will be discussed in greater detail elsewhere (cf. Bauer in preparation), it is necessary to expand briefly on the historical status of impersonal verbs in combination with a subject-Nominative. Instances of impersonal weather verbs in combination with a subject are found in many early daughter languages in addition to the forms without a subject. Yet the early languages do not provide conclusive evidence in favor of the originality of either structure. The occurrence of verb forms in combination with a noun referring to a deity may not be consistent enough to support the originality of the structure. In addition, there is cross-linguistic variation in the connection between a given deity and the meteorological condition he is assumed to be responsible for. Yet evidence from Indo-European religion may suggest that the protolanguage at a late stage included weather verbs in combination with a subject. As Professor Polomé pointed out (personal communication), “all Indo-European peoples believed that the gods were responsible for atmospheric conditions, hence the high incidence of atmospheric gods responsible for wind, rain, thunder, and so forth. On the basis of this evidence one may assume that the name of the god responsible of the weather condition was used in combination with the verb conveying it. Verbs such as *Ζεὺς ὕει* or *Jupiter tonat* would then be relic forms.” These considerations and the predominance of weather verbs without

subject in the early daughter languages suggest that both types of structure existed in Proto-Indo-European at a late stage. Only a thorough comparative analysis of the evolution of religious concepts, including non-Indo-European evidence, would perhaps inform us about the originality of either structure at earlier stages.

In his study of the evolution of Mesopotamian religion Jacobsen (1976) pointed out various phases in religious thinking and argued that the concept of gods as acting beings was not original. In an earlier stage, when religion focused on "the power of fertility" and "the power of nature," gods were thought of as powers that "made no demands, did not act, merely came into being, [were], and ceased being in and with its characteristic phenomenon" (1976:9; 26). It would be worthwhile to analyze the connection between religious concepts of this type and earlier ones, the notion of responsibility, and that of an acting subject as expressed in a structure including a weather verb and a deity. Such studies, to my knowledge, do not exist. Consequently, with the current state of affairs it is not possible to decide, on the basis of conclusive evidence, on the originality of impersonal weather verbs in the earliest stages of Proto-Indo-European.

4 Impersonal verbs of categories II and III in Latin

Impersonal verbs of category II and III in Indo-European differ from weather verbs in three ways: they display argument structure, they share cross-linguistically very few—if any—etymological roots (Brugmann 1925:22-4; Pokorny 1959: passim), and they may be bound structures.

Consequently, impersonal verbs in Indo-European that refer to mental and physical state and convey modal values, differ from weather verbs, but like these, they typically are third person singular forms. In later periods third person plural forms are occasionally also attested. More typical is their combining with a nominal element, either a noun or a pronoun, in the oblique case. On the basis of the case with which they combine, they can be further divided into categories. In Latin we find impersonal verbs that combine with a dative, impersonal verbs that combine with an accusative, and impersonal verbs that combine with an accusative and a genitive.

Impersonal verbs that combine with a dative

This group of impersonal verbs is common in Latin and includes quite a range of meanings: there are approximately 15 simple verbs, the majority of which have a variety of derivatives and compounds. These all display the same syntactic pattern and combine with a dative. This variety as well as widespread derivational processes suggest that these verbs represent a productive morphological category. The majority of them convey physical and emotional states and experiences and the (pro)nominal element in the dative refers to the person (or persons) experiencing the feeling or emotion or the person to whom the modality applies:

Impersonal verbs referring to emotional states:

Present		Perfective
<i>mihi</i>	<i>placet</i>	<i>mihi placitum est/placuit</i>
me-Dat.	please-Impers.	
'enjoy'		
<i>mihi</i>	<i>displicet</i>	<i>mihi displicitum est</i>
me-Dat.	dislike-Imper.	
'dislike'		
<i>mihi</i>	<i>collibet</i>	<i>mihi collibitum est / collibuit</i>
me-Dat.	like-Impers.	
'like'		
<i>mihi</i>	<i>dolet</i>	<i>mihi doluit</i>
me-Dat.	pain-Impers.	
'pain'		

Impersonal verbs referring to modality:

<i>mihi</i>	<i>licet</i>	<i>mihi licitum/licuit</i>
me-Dat.	allow-Impers.	
'be allowed'		
<i>mihi</i>	<i>accidit</i>	<i>mihi accidit</i>
me-Dat.	happen-Impers.	
'happen'		

In addition to productive derivation, these verbs display other morphological characteristics. The vast majority of them are second conjugation verbs, which are etymologically intransitive and stative (Leumann and Hofmann 1965:540-42; Sihler 1995). In addition the perfective form of these impersonal verbs (in *-itum est*) originally was compound, cf. the example above (*mihi placitum est*, '(I) was pleased;,' only later

non-compound forms developed and spread, eventually replacing the original ones, cf. (*mihi*) *placuit*. The formation in *-itum est* suggests that these verbs were originally impersonal (cf. Ernout and Thomas 1964:209).

From a syntactic point of view, it is to be noted that these structures may include bound constructions and may occur without indirect object, as the following example shows:

<i>id ...</i>	<i>acciderat,</i>	<i>ut ...</i>	<i>Galli ...</i>
it-Nom.	happen-3sg.-Pf-Pst.	that	Gauls-Nom.
<i>consilium</i>	<i>caperent</i> (DBG 3.2)		
plan-Acc.	adopt-3pl-Subju-Pst.		
'it happened that the Gauls adopted the plan'			

In addition these verbs occasionally combine with a subject-Nominative, which is predominantly—if not exclusively—pronominal, cf.:

<i>quodne</i>	<i>vobis</i>	<i>placeat,</i>
what-Nom.	you-Dat.	please-3sg-Subju.
<i>displiceat</i>	<i>mihi</i>	(Pl., Mil. 614)
displease-3sg.-Subju.	me-Dat.	
'can I be dissatisfied with what satisfies you?'		

Impersonal verbs that combine with an accusative

This group of verbs is much smaller than the previous one, it includes fewer verbs and does not present the morphological consistencies of the previous group. The verbs also represent various conjugations, cf.:

Present Perfective

<i>me fallit</i>	<i>me fefellit</i>	'I am ignorant'	(3rd conj.)
<i>me delectat</i>	<i>me delectavit</i>	'I am pleased'	(1st conj.)
<i>me decet</i>	<i>me decitum est</i>	'it becomes me'	(2nd conj.)

This last example is one of the few second conjugation verbs in this group and also one of the few verbs featuring a compound perfective form with the participle in *-itum*. *Decet* was therefore originally an impersonal verb. Its occurrence with the "passive" infinitive supports this assumption (Ernout and Thomas 1964), cf.

<i>desisti</i>	<i>decet</i> (Pl., Mil. 737)
'I have to set down'	

In contrast to the two other groups of impersonal verbs discussed in this section (that is impersonal verbs that combine

with a dative and the ones that combine with an accusative and genitive), these impersonal verbs convey both types of meaning: they refer to emotional and physical state as well as modality. They therefore do not have the morphological nor the semantic consistency of the two other groups of verbs under discussion here.

Impersonal verbs that combine an accusative and a genitive

The last group of impersonal verbs that is discussed in this paper includes verbs that combine with a genitive and an accusative. They predominantly convey emotions and physical experiences:

<i>fratris</i>	<i>me ...</i>	<i>pudet</i>
brother-Gen.	me-Acc.	be-ashamed-3sg.
<i>pigetque</i>	(Ter., Ad. 391-2)	
be-disgusted-3sg-and		
'I am ashamed and disgusted of my brother'		

In this example, as in other instances with this type of structure, the accusative refers to the element (i.c. the person) experiencing the feeling, whereas the genitive refers to its source. Although these verbs are less frequent than the ones that combine with a dative, they present a number of similarities: they have many derivatives (by compounding as well as affixation), which display the same syntax as the basic verbs, governing a genitive and an accusative. In addition like the verbs combining with a dative, the vast majority of these verbs—simple and derivatives—are second conjugation verbs. Moreover they also have a perfective in *-itum est*, which confirms their originality as impersonal verbs:

Gen. <i>me pudet</i>	(Pf. <i>puditum est</i> ; later: <i>pudui</i>)
'I am ashamed'	
Gen. <i>me miseret</i>	(Pf. <i>misertum est</i> ; later: <i>miserui</i>)
'I have pity'	
Gen. <i>me taedet</i>	(Pf. <i>taesum est</i> ; later: <i>taedui</i>)
'I am disgusted'	

The specific syntactic status of the genitive argument—which is typically an adnominal element—will not be further discussed here (see Bauer, in preparation). It is striking, however, that impersonal verbs featuring the genitive and accusative are typically unbound. They do not include subordination or complementation of any kind. As a result,

these structures are nominal, displaying an impersonal verb that is combined with two (pro)nominal elements in the genitive and accusative.

This overview shows that Latin impersonal verbs display quite a variety of forms and structures. Yet they also share important characteristics: they are all third person singular forms and do not combine with a subject-Nominative. If there is any argument structure at all, the accusative or an oblique case will be found in that context. Finally, since impersonal verbs typically display third singular forms and arguments—if any—in oblique cases (including the accusative), there is no subject-verb agreement. Consequently, these structures do not fit the patterns of nominative typology, which characterizes Proto-Indo-European and its daughter languages. In addition, impersonal verbs featuring a genitive and accusative differ from their equivalents that combine with a dative in that they are unbound nominal structures, exclusively featuring nouns and pronouns in oblique cases.

Impersonal verbs that convey emotions and modality, and that combine with oblique cases are predominantly second conjugation verbs, the majority of which represent the former class of stative verbs. From this perspective, the exclusive occurrence of oblique case is striking for two reasons. In active languages, stative verbs typically combine with inactive elements (cf. Klimov 1974:29). Second, the oblique case refers to the person affected by the condition or event expressed by the verb. This situation reminds us of the structures found in American Indian languages, which include many impersonal verbs that combine with an oblique case (Pinnow 1964:84). Moreover in Tunica, which is an active language, a specific group of stative verbs, which combine with stative affixes, convey emotional, physical and mental states, such as 'to be ashamed,' 'to want,' 'to be hungry,' and so forth (Haas 1940). Consequently while the morphology of impersonal forms in *-r* corresponds to grammatical regularities in active languages as Lehmann pointed out (1991), the argument structure of the impersonal verbs discussed here, their stative origin, and the meanings conveyed by them show striking similarities to patterns observed in active Indian languages.

As was pointed out above, the typical impersonal construction in Latin and the other Indo-European languages is characterized by (1) the (quasi) exclusive use of the third person verbal form, which lacks subject agreement, and (2) the use of oblique cases referring to the person affected. Consequently, these patterns do not fit the predominant syntax of Indo-European or the daughter languages, which are all transitive nominative languages: their clauses typically display subject-Nominatives in connection with verbs that agree in person and number with the subject and govern a direct object. Yet the development that many of the impersonal verbs discussed here subsequently underwent in the history of Latin fits the predominant and ever spreading nominative pattern of Indo-European languages.

5 The development of impersonal verbs

Impersonal verbs not only were common and widespread in Latin, they also included many different types: the forms in *-r*, weather verbs, the verbs conveying emotions and modal values, and even expressions with nouns or adjectives, which were not further discussed here (e.g. *mos est* 'it is the custom'). Despite the variety in forms and meanings, there is a definite pattern in this type of verbs: not only because (almost) all impersonal verbs have Indo-European roots—even if most impersonal verbs do not share the same roots cross-linguistically—but also because of their syntax and morphology, as was pointed out above.

Even languages that are diachronically closely related, such as Latin and French, do not share the same roots for impersonal verbs, which shows how easily the lexical elements in these contexts change, while the structure remains the same. The only impersonal verb, apart from weather verbs, that can be found in all Romance languages and that is directly traced back to an impersonal verb in Latin is Italian *me piace*, or French *il me plaît*, whose Latin cognate is *mihi placet* 'I like.' This observation corroborates the diachronic evidence in the individual languages which shows that over time lexical elements in these structures change easily: the actual verbs may change but the structure, as a rule, remains.

Yet despite the relative consistency of these structures as opposed to their lexical elements, an important grammatical change took place in the Late Latin period, which may account

for the predominance of a specific type of impersonal verbs in the other Indo-European languages. In the Late Latin period an important number of impersonal verbs developed personal paradigms, whereas simultaneously a number of verbs that were originally personal developed impersonal uses with specific meanings.

Impersonal verbs shifting to personal use

Examples that illustrate this shift are rather common in Late Latin but occasional instances can be found in the early period also. The shift entailed in fact two changes: the non-nominative case in these structures was replaced by the subject-Nominative and, second, the verb came to agree in person and number with the grammatical subject, cf:

<i>me</i>	<i>pudet</i> >	<i>pudeo</i> (extremely rare before Late Latin)
me-Acc.	ashamed-Impers.	shame-1sg
'I am ashamed'		

Similarly:

<i>me paenitet</i>	>	<i>paeniteo</i>	'I regret'
<i>me paenitet</i>	>	<i>paeniteor</i>	'I regret'
<i>me piget</i>	>	<i>pigeo</i> (very rare before the Late Latin period)	'I am disgusted'
<i>me taedet</i>	>	<i>taedeo</i>	'I am disgusted'

The following examples did occur, but remained rare:

<i>mihi libet</i>	>	<i>libeo</i>	'I like'
<i>me decet</i>	>	<i>deceo</i>	'it is proper'

The above examples show that a number of impersonal verbs came to be replaced temporarily with passive or deponential forms (e.g. *taedeor*). It is difficult to pinpoint the chronology of the development and to decide, for example, whether *paeniteor* preceded *paeniteo* or vice versa. Considering the syntax of the original structure, which included an accusative, it seems plausible that *paeniteor* preceded *paeniteo*. Yet there are so far no attestations of the type **pudeor* or **pigeor*. Only a systematic occurrence of forms of that type would have supported the chronology suggested earlier.

While it has been observed earlier that a number of impersonal verbs developed personal paradigms (cf. Einar Löfstedt 1911, 1956; Bengt Löfstedt 1965-66), the specific nature of the verbs involved has—to my knowledge—not been noted. Yet examination of the verbs that underwent a shift to personal forms reveals that these verbs predominantly refer to emotional state and physical experience. Consequently, the shift typically affected category II verbs. The oblique case referring to the element that from the perspective of an nominative language is the underlying subject is replaced by a nominative. Accordingly, the change fits the tendency that is observed in Indo-European languages, where the prototypical clause structure, as mentioned earlier, is subject-Nominative, direct object-Accusative and finite verb.

Personal verbs developing impersonal uses

Although the development of personal paradigms was a clear tendency, the reverse shift can also be observed in the history of Latin. Yet here also the change is observed in the literature, but the specific semantic and syntactic nature of the verbs involved is not taken into account. Parallel to the change mentioned earlier, a number of personal verbs developed impersonal uses conveying a specific meaning, such as (Löfstedt 1936: 41-2; 137-8):

<i>debet</i>	+	infinitive	'one ought to ...'
<i>potest</i>	+	infinitive	'it is possible to ...'
<i>valet</i>	+	infinitive	'it is possible'
<i>gestit</i>	+	ACI	'long for'
<i>gestit</i>	+	Abl.	'long for' (rare)
<i>vacat</i>	+	Dat.	'enjoy'

See, for example:

sanguinem emittere ... de capite debet
 blood-Acc. let-Inf. from head-Abl. must-Impers.
 'one ought to let blood from its head' (*Mul. Chir.* 133)

This short list of examples illustrates that these impersonal structures commonly combine with an infinitive. Also they introduce subordinate clauses. These impersonal uses survived in the Romance languages: impersonal *debet* and *potest* survived as *il se doit* (attested from 1168 onward in Old French) and *il se peut*, which are bound structures. It is striking that these uses

typically convey modal value. Consequently, whereas impersonal verbs conveying emotions and physical experience shifted to personal forms, impersonal uses were created that convey modal values.

In addition, two other impersonal uses developed in the same period and became important verbs in Romance: *habet* (< *habere* 'have') and *facit* (< *facere* 'make, do'). *Habet* was used from the Late Latin period onward in expressions referring to space and time and conveys the meaning 'there is, there are' (Väänänen 1987:72; Löfstedt 1911:43 et seq.):

<i>habebat ...</i>	<i>de loco</i>	<i>ad montem ...</i>
have-Impf-3sg.	from place-Abl.	to mountain-Acc.
<i>quattuor milia (Peregrinatio, 1.2)</i>		
four miles-Acc.		
'it was four miles from that place ... to the mountain'		
<i>habet</i>	<i>annos</i>	<i>XIV (Hist. Apoll. 31)</i>
have-3sg.	years-Acc.	fourteen
'fourteen years ago'		

These uses survived in French, for example, where they are very common, conveying time, cf:

<i>l'ancien président</i>	<i>est mort</i>	<i>il y a</i>
the former president	die-Pf-3sg.	there-have-3sg.
<i>deux</i>	<i>mois</i>	
two	months	
'the former president died two months ago'		

and location:

<i>il y a</i>	<i>une bibliothèque</i>	<i>sur le campus</i>
there-have-3sg.	a library	on campus
'there is a library on campus'		

This development had its parallel in many Indo-European branches, where similar verbs with transitive syntax appeared in this function (cf. Brugmann 1925:34-6) and it shows that the verb *habeo*, which was originally a purely lexical element meaning 'grasp,' had eventually become a verb with a wide range of meanings and functions, one of which is specifying state. In contrast with the other state verb 'be' (cf. Benveniste 1969), it features, however, transitive syntax (see also Bauer, forthcoming).

Facit also survives in the Romance languages as an impersonal structure and conveys the function it already had in

Late Latin, that of expressing weather conditions. Despite their impersonal use, *facit* and *habet* display transitive syntax, as the occurrence of the accusative in the Late Latin examples shows:

<i>numquam</i>	<i>fecit</i>	<i>tale</i>	<i>frigus</i>
never	make-Pf.-3sg.	such-Acc.	cold-Acc.
'never had it been so cold'		(Aug., <i>Serm.</i> 25.3)	
(Leumann and Hofmann 1965:416)			

See also the example given above:

<i>habet</i>	<i>annos</i>	<i>XIV</i>
have-3sg.	years-Acc.	fourteen
'fourteen years ago'		

Consequently, in Late Latin a number of otherwise personal verbs developed impersonal uses predominantly conveying modality, weather conditions, and location in space and time.

The discussion in the preceding paragraphs showed that development of impersonal verbs in the Latin period was twofold. It is striking that impersonal structures that express emotions and physical experience, in which the underlying subject is easily identifiable, developed characteristics of a nominative language, as the emergence of a subject in the nominative and subject-verb agreement reflects. This morphological marking indicates that the experiencer of a verb expressing state is henceforth considered to be grammatically the equivalent of the agent of an action. This development fits the general tendencies of Indo-European languages.

Conversely the verbs that remained impersonal or developed impersonal uses (e.g. *facit*, *habet*, or *debet*) are somewhat different. On the one hand the impersonal use of *facit* in weather conditions and *habet* in space and time reference typically displays transitive syntax although they do not convey typically transitive action. On the other hand, impersonal verbs that were original and continued to be used as impersonals convey modal values. Since the underlying "agency" is less apparent in these verbs than in verbs conveying emotions it is clear why these verbs are late in developing personal forms. In addition their use may also be related to their bound nature and especially their combining with infinitives, which fits the increasing use of auxiliaries. As was pointed out at the beginning of this paper, auxiliaries developed with the emergence of VO, or right-branching,

structures, and they typically combine with infinitives (cf. Lehmann 1972;1973; Bauer 1995). From a structural point of view impersonals referring to modality are therefore not very different from auxiliary structures that also developed.

The diachronic evidence from Latin may account for the situation that is found, for example, in Ancient Greek, which had few impersonal verbs left at an early time. It is striking that the majority of these remaining impersonals convey modal values, as in:

ἔξεσσι μοι	'it is allowed to me'
χρή	'there is need'
γίγνεται μοί	'it happens to me'
δεῖ με	'I have to'

Likewise in English, which has still quite a range of impersonal verbs, the large majority cover modality meanings. In addition, in the history of English a development took place that is similar to what is found in Latin. Old English displayed approximately 40 impersonal verbs (derivatives are not included). Despite the borrowing of impersonal verbs from Old French and the Scandinavian languages, the number of impersonals decreased dramatically from the Middle English period on. This change, which took place mainly in the 14th and 15th centuries, affected verbs such as *rewen* 'regret,' *long* 'long,' *liken* 'like,' *meten* 'dream,' *pinken* 'think,' *geynen* 'profit,' *neden* 'need,' and so forth (Gaaf 1904). The large majority of these verbs convey emotional or physical state: as in Latin this type of verbs shifted from an impersonal construction, displaying a dative or accusative, to a construction with a verb form that agrees in person and number with a subject in the nominative. By contrast, verbs conveying modality remained impersonal (these conclusions are based on evidence from Gaaf 1904, Mitchell 1985). From this perspective the verb *neden* is interesting in that it developed personal forms only in the meaning of 'need,' but kept the impersonal construction when it conveyed the notion of 'obligation,' cf.

Middle English				Modern English
<i>me</i>	<i>nede</i>	>		<i>I need</i>
me-Dat.	need-Impers.			
<i>me</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>nede</i>	>	<i>I need</i>
me-Dat.	be-3sg.	need-Subj.		

But:

it need not to be asked
(Gaaf 1904:127-9).

6 Conclusion

The consistency in occurrence, meaning, and form (third person singular), suggests that the impersonal verb was a structure that the daughter languages inherited from the protolanguage and that conveyed weather conditions, emotional and physical state, and modality. In Italic the impersonal verb not only represented a well-preserved category, it also underwent a development in line with one of the major changes in Indo-European languages, the increasing spreading of nominative structures.

Meteorological verbs are the most widespread type of impersonal verbs in Indo-European and they share more etymologies than any other impersonal verbs. Impersonal verbs conveying emotions and modal values (categories II and III) share few cross-linguistic etymologies, they are predominantly second conjugation verbs—which are retraced to the former stative verbs—and they typically display argument structure: these impersonal verbs combine with oblique cases. The characteristic that is shared by all impersonal verbs is the exclusive occurrence of the third person singular verb form. Since that form is the only form of the paradigm, there is no person specification in the verb form itself. Consequently, the verb form only indicates the condition or event (as in weather verbs) or the state (as in verbs conveying emotions and modality) and the actual grammatical category—verbal or nominal—is perhaps not relevant. The morphological characteristics of the suffix *-r* that occurs in impersonal forms of the type *itur*, and which is found in nouns and verbs, as pointed out by Lehmann (1991), may support this hypothesis. Earlier Delbrück (1900:29-35) and Paul (1937:131) came to similar conclusions on the basis of a different reasoning. In structures with impersonal verbs that express emotional or physical state and modality, the person affected is referred to in an oblique

case. These structures show striking similarities with what is found in active Indian languages, such as Tunica.

The grammatical development that took place in Late Latin is characterized by a shift to personal forms in verbs that express emotional, physical and mental state. By contrast the category of verbs expressing modality remained impersonal and their number even increased. A similar development is observed in English, which suggests that the change was not limited to Italic, but affected Indo-European languages in general. This assumption is supported by the predominance of impersonal modality verbs in early Indo-European languages with few impersonal verbs, such as Ancient Greek or Sanskrit. In addition, in modern Indo-European languages that still include many impersonal verbs, such as Russian, there is a slight predominance of modality verbs.

Consequently, whereas weather verbs remained impersonal—despite the occasional use of a subject-Nominative in this context—the category of impersonal verbs in which the “subject” is easily identifiable (that is, verbs conveying emotion and physical experience) developed personal paradigms with a subject in the nominative and verb-subject agreement. This pattern fits the predominant clause structure of Indo-European languages. Since the “subject” is less obvious in modality verbs, the change occurs late in these verbs.

The original abundance of impersonal verbs in Latin is related to the archaic nature of Latin syntax, which is also reflected in the occurrence of *mihi est* constructions to indicate possession, verbal *mihi est* constructions, or absolute constructions (cf. Bauer 1993; 1994). It is striking that the development of these structures also is characterized by a shift to transitive syntax.

Despite lengthy discussions and analyses at the turn of this century it was not possible to account for the existence of impersonal verbs in Indo-European languages. Now that it becomes increasingly clear that Proto-Indo-European in origin was a non-nominative, presumably active, language, there is a new perspective from which the data can be reexamined. Synchronic analysis provides evidence to support the assumption that impersonal verbs do not fit the patterns of a nominative language, but rather show similarities with patterns of active typology. Subsequent diachronic analysis, which shows that these forms were replaced by nominative structures, not

only supports the synchronic findings, but also illustrates the ever increasing spread of nominative structures in Indo-European languages.

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