Causative Constructions: The Realization of the Causee

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0. Introduction

In this article, we will discuss the causative construction in a variety of languages. More specifically, we will focus on the realization of the subject of the embedded predicate. As is well known, the subject of a transitive verb can be expressed in various ways in this construction: in French, it surfaces as a dative NP; in German, it surfaces as an accusative NP; in both French and German, it can be left implicit or be realized by means of a "passive" by-phrase. The realization of the subject of an intransitive verb is more restricted; in both French and German, it shows up as an accusative NP. Although these facts have repeatedly been observed in the literature, they have not received a satisfactory explanation or uniform analysis. Our central claim is that the observed variation is due to the fact that structural case-assignment to the subject of an embedded transitive verb is problematic for theoretical reasons. We will suggest that languages deal with this problem by means of different strategies allowed by Universal Grammar, which are ranked on a hierarchy which expresses cost and thus typological frequency. In this article, we deal with the purely causative faire-type construction, while the permissive laisser-type is only briefly mentioned.

1. Causative verbs: theoretical background

In this section, we will show that, from the perspective of the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995), problems arise with respect to structural case-assignment to the subject of an embedded transitive verb, but not of an unergative or unaccusative verb: an analysis in terms of Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) must therefore be reexamined in the minimalist framework.

As our point of departure, we adopt the theory of phrase structure in Chomsky (1995:chapter 3) — significantly, we will assume that AGR-phrases are present in the structure. If we restrict the functional structure of the sentence to its absolute minimum, we conclude on the basis of conceptual necessity that the sentence contains at least the following functional heads, if the embedded verb is transitive: (i) an AGR-head associated with the embedded verb to account for the

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1 We would like to thank Marcel den Dikken and an anonymous reviewer for their comments on a previous version of this article. In order to avoid confusion, it must be noted that the term "causee" is used in an a-theoretic sense in this article, and does not refer to a certain Θ-role.
fact that the verb checks the case-feature of its object; (ii) an AGR-head associated with the causative verb to account for the fact that the latter checks the case-feature of the external argument of the embedded verb; (iii) an I-head to account for the fact that the case-feature of the external argument of the causative verb is checked. In the case of an embedded transitive verb, the minimal structure required is thus as given in (1). The arrows indicate the derivation that ultimately derives the LF-structure of the sentence.

(1)

However, the derivation in (1) is ruled out as it violates the Minimal Link Condition (MLC): movement of SUBJ\textsubscript{2} into the higher SpecAGR\textsubscript{o}P crosses the lower SpecAGR\textsubscript{o}P, and since these two positions are not within the same minimal domain this movement is illicit. Note that it makes no difference whether we assume that the embedded verb incorporates into the causative, or not; after adjunction of the lower AGR\textsubscript{o} to the causative, there is still no minimal domain that contains both SpecAGR\textsubscript{o}Ps. Consequently, we must conclude that the subject of the embedded verb cannot be assigned structural accusative case if the structure

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2 Since the distinction between AGR\textsubscript{s} and T does not play a role in the present discussion, we indicate these by I.

3 If Move-\textalpha is replaced by Attract-\textalpha (Chomsky 1995: chapter 4), the discussion above implies that the operation Attract-\textalpha always involves categorial features, and that the formal (e.g. case) features are always carried along as free riders.
is as given in (1); that is, ECM must occur in a different configuration in the case of transitive verbs.\footnote{If we were to follow Chomsky (1995:ch.4) in assuming that AGR is not present in the structure, the same results would follow under the following non-trivial assumptions: (i) accusative case is checked in the outer Spec of vP, (ii) an object in the outer Spec of vP blocks movement of the subject in the inner Spec of vP, unless movement of v takes place, (iii) v does not incorporate into the causative verb, and (iv) the overt and covert derivations both observe (i)-(iii).}

Note that the problem with respect to the MLC does not occur with unergative and unaccusative verbs — the embedded subject can be assigned structural case. For unergative verbs, we may assume that the lower AGR\(_o\)P is not present. Hence, movement of the embedded subject into SpecAGR\(_o\)P only crosses the specifier position of the matrix verb, which is licit since SpecVP and SpecAGR\(_o\)P are in the minimal domain of the chain that results from movement of the causative verb to the higher AGR\(_o\)P. Similar results hold for verbs whose complement need not be moved for checking purposes, such as PP complements.

If we are dealing with an unaccusative verb, the lower AGR\(_o\)P is probably present, but the internal argument may use its specifier position as an intermediate landing-site. Therefore, movement of the internal argument of the embedded verb only skips SpecVP, which is licit for the same reason as in the case of movement of the subject of an unergative verb. Consequently, we expect to find differences between constructions embedding a transitive verb on the one hand, and constructions embedding an unergative or unaccusative verb on the other. Below, we will show that this expectation is indeed borne out.

2. Causative verbs that take a transitive complement: some data

If we embed a transitive verb under a causative verb, something special must be done to arrive at a licit structure. The first option is to insert an additional functional projection between the causative verb and the lower AGR\(_o\)P, for instance by assuming that both verbs are accompanied by the full set of functional projections (i.e. IP and AGR\(_o\)P). In this case, the structure below the matrix verb must be as given in (2).

\[
(2) \quad \text{V \{IP ... I \{AGR\_o \ldots \text{AGR}\_o [VP SUBj V OBJ]}\}}
\]

Assuming that the embedded infinitive moves to I, the derivation may proceed as indicated without violating the MLC, and consequently the external argument can be assigned accusative case by the causative verb. Given the fact that the causee (see footnote 1 for this notion) can be assigned accusative case in German, but
not in French, we must conclude that only the former language makes use of this option. This is illustrated in (3).

(3) a *Elle fera Jean manger cette pomme.
   a’ *Elle le fera manger cette pomme.
   ‘She will make Jean/him eat that apple.’

b Hans läßt den Mechaniker das Auto reparieren.
   ‘Hans makes the mechanic the car repair’

Inserting an additional IP is not the only possibility. Another solution is to leave the external argument of the embedded verb (the causee) unexpressed in an impersonal construction, as in the French and German examples in (4a) and (4b), respectively.

(4) a Elle fera manger cette pomme.
   ‘She will have that apple eaten.’

b Hans läßt das Auto reparieren.
   ‘Hans makes the car repair’

Although the embedded verb has been constructed impersonally in (4), this does not mean that the causee cannot be expressed. There are two possibilities. The first is to express the causee internal to the embedded VP — as the data in (5) show, the suppressed agent may optionally surface as a prepositional adjunct, similar to the agentive by-phrase in passive constructions.

(5) a Elle fera manger cette pomme (par Jean).
   b Hans läßt das Auto (von den Mechaniker) reparieren.

The second option is to express the causee in the matrix clause by inserting an optional indirect object to the causative verb, resulting in a ditransitive causative verb. We follow Den Dikken’s (1995) proposal for causative constructions as parallel to double object constructions, with the difference that we generalize Hoekstra’s (1994) small clause analysis of predication to all dative environments. Thus, we assume that the embedded VP/AGR_{o}P and the prepositional indirect object make up a Small Clause: [sc VP/AGR_{o}P [P NP]]. Crucially, the dative PP expressing the causee is an argument of the causative verb. Given the fact that the subject of the embedded verb surfaces as a dative NP in French, but not in German, we conclude that only the former language makes use of this option, as is shown in (6). In passing, note that the fact that the causee cannot be realized by a lexical (dative) DP follows from the fact that Dative Shift only applies in French if the indirect object is a clitic.
(6) a Elle fera manger cette pomme à Jean.
   a’ Elle lui fera manger cette pomme.
   she him will-make eat that apple to Jean
   ‘She will make Jean/him eat that apple.’

b *Hans läßt dem Mechaniker das Auto reparieren.
   Hans makes the mechanic the car repair

The difference between the oblique by-phrase and the dative phrase correlates with a difference in affectedness: an oblique causee is not affected by the causer, that is, the oblique phrase simply expresses by whom the caused event is carried out (Alsina 1992); a dative causee, on the other hand, is an affected object (cf. Zubizarreta 1985).

With respect to English, it must be noted that only the derivation in (2) is possible: the impersonal construction, with an implicit argument, a by-phrase, or a dative, is always ungrammatical, as is shown in (7b) and (7c). The subject of the embedded verb must be overtly expressed in the accusative case, as shown in (7a). This language-specific restriction will ultimately be due to independent factors.

(7) a John made Bill eat snails.
    b *John made eat snails (by Bill).
    c *John made eat snails to Bill.

For convenience, we summarize the differences in case-marking of the subject of a transitive verb embedded under a causative verb in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>accusative subject</th>
<th>dative subject</th>
<th>implicit construction (+ by-phrase)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The central proposal of this paper is that languages have the options given in (8) available to them for the expression of the causee, and that the typological frequency of these options follows from considerations of derivational economy. This is expressed as the Preference Principle in (9) which draws on the basic intuition that more functional heads introduce more formal features that must be checked, so that more instances of Merge/Move are needed at a greater derivational cost.
According to Comrie (1981), the typological frequency of the options in (8) is: implicit/oblique > dative > accusative (we have no information about the oblique construction, but we expect it to occur approximately as often as the implicit construction). The implicit construction is best according to (9) as the causee is not overtly expressed, so that no functional heads are needed for checking. The same holds for the oblique construction. If dative case is a structural case, as is argued by Webelhuth (1995) and Broekhuis and Cornips (1994), the dative construction is less preferred according to (9) as the case of the causee must be checked in an AGR\(_O\)P associated with the causative verb. Finally, the accusative construction is least preferred, as an additional IP associated with the embedded verb and an AGR\(_O\)P associated with the causative verb are needed in order to allow movement and case checking of the accusative causee. Thus, the Preference Principle in (9) explains Comrie's (1981) generalization about the typological frequency of the different types of causative constructions.

3. A note on ditransitive verbs

Embedding a ditransitive verb under a causative verb results in the same case-assignment problems as a transitive complement. A further problem appears to arise however as there is a tendency towards the implicit construction with an oblique causee as in (10a), as dative case is already used in the embedded VP, as in (10b). This fact has been noted and attributed to various case filters or hierarchies proposed in the literature (e.g. Baker 1988, Comrie 1981).

\[
\begin{align*}
(10) \quad a & \quad \text{J'ai fait écrire une lettre au directeur par Paul} \\
& \quad \text{?*Paul a fait écrire une lettre à Marie à Pierre}
\end{align*}
\]

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5 Similar principles are proposed by Law (1991) and Grimshaw (to appear) among others. It must be noted that the Preference Principle must not be considered an absolute, universal economy condition in the sense of Chomsky (1995) since we would then predict the derivation in (2) to be blocked by the impersonal constructions in (8). This is wrong, since we have just seen that German has both the accusative and the implicit/oblique construction. The principle in (9) interacts with other principles of language and can be violated for specific reasons, for instance, (i) the specific language does not allow an impersonal construction at all (cf. the discussion of English below), or (ii) the structure in (2) is preferred in order to avoid information loss.
However, there is no theoretical problem with having two instances of the same case in causative constructions. English has two accusative NPs, as in (11a), and French can have two dative NPs, as long as one of them is a clitic and is dative shifted as in (11b).

(11) a John made Bill give Mary the book.
b Paul lui a fait écrire une lettre au directeur. (Kayne:336)
    Paul him$_{dat.}$ has made write a letter to-the director

Therefore, double cases are fine as long as the ambiguity is resolved in some other way, for instance by word order or movement. Our proposal allows Case Filters to be dispensed with as unnecessary. The case filter effects are not deep constraints on case-assignment but rather surface restrictions on adjacency of the same case marker, to avoid potential ambiguity (for example, two datives might be interpreted as two of the same thematic roles without coordination). This is further illustrated in (12a), in which the $wh$-phrase in clause-initial position must be construed as the causee, $wh$-movement of the goal being restricted to the case in which the causee is a clitic, as in (12b) (cf. Den Dikken 1995:253ff.).

(12) a À qui$_{causee}$ feras-tu porter ce message à Pierre$_{goal}$?
a' *À qui$_{goal}$ feras-tu porter ce message à Pierre$_{causee}$?
    to whom will-make-you carry this message to Pierre
b À qui$_{goal}$ lui$_{causee}$ feras-tu porter ce message?
    to whom him$_{dat.}$ will-make-you carry this message

4. Causative verbs that take an unergative/unaccusative complement: some data

In principle, the options given in (8) are available for intransitive verbs as well. As discussed in section 1, there is no theoretical reason to exclude ECM in the case of unergative and unaccusative verbs, so ECM can occur without the insertion of an extra functional projection. We thus predict the ECM case-marking not to be less preferred than the impersonal constructions for intransitives. In this section we will show that our theoretical considerations reflect the wide-spread cross-linguistic uniformity of accusative case for the subject of intransitive complements.

Consider the following French data from Kayne (1975:202ff.). The argument of both the embedded unergative verb in (13a) and the unaccusative verb in (13b) must have accusative case. Since dative case leads to full ungrammaticality, it seems that ECM is the only option for realizing the embedded subject’s case, even in a language which uses the dative construction with transitive verbs. Note that if the embedded clause contains additional material that does not enter into a checking relation with the embedded verb, as in (14), ECM is unaffected (cf. the discussion in section 1); (14a) shows an unergative verb with a prepositional
complement, and (14b) an unaccusative verb with a locative phrase (which we consider to be the predicative part of a Small Clause).

(13) a Cela fera rire tous le monde.
   a’ *Cela fera rire à tous le monde.
   that will-make laugh to everyone
b II a fait partir son amie.
b’ *II a fait partir à son amie.
   he has made leave to his friend

(14) a On fera parler Jean de son dernier voyage.
   we will-make talk Jean about his last trip
b Elle fera rentrer son enfant dans sa chambre.
   she will-make go-back her child to his room

Note however that according to Authier and Reed (1991), both the accusative and the dative construction are grammatical in some French dialects if the embedded verb is unergative, as in (13a), while the dative construction is always unacceptable if the embedded verb is unaccusative, as in (13b). This follows from our proposal: since the dative construction involves suppression of the external argument of the embedded verb, it cannot arise in the case of an unaccusative verb — its internal argument must therefore surface and be assigned accusative case under ECM.

There is also evidence for the implicit construction, which may retain some preference over ECM as the causative verb need not project its AGRoP. In general, the implicit construction is possible for unergative verbs but disallowed for unaccusatives, as shown for French in (15), taken from Zubizarreta (1985). Similar results have been reported by Grewendorf (1982) for German, as illustrated in (16). Again, this difference between unergatives and unaccusatives

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6 Dutch, which otherwise behaves just like German, obeys slightly different restrictions on the implicit construction. If an intransitive verb has no PP complements, as in (i), the implicit construction is unacceptable. However, if an unergative verb has a PP complement, the implicit construction is fully grammatical (Coopmans and Everaert 1988:95), as illustrated in (ii). Although (i) is problematic, the examples in (ii) indicate that the implicit construction is possible with unergative verbs. Finally, unaccusative verbs are categorically rejected in the implicit construction in Dutch, as predicted. This is shown in (iii) for an unaccusative verb that selects a predicative prepositional phrase.

(i) a. De chef liet *(de sollicitant) wachten.
    the manager made the applicant wait
b. Zij liet *(de jongen) struikelen.
    she made the boy stumble
(ii) a. Jan liet *(de dokter) naar zijn been kijken.
    Jan made the doctor at his leg look
b. Jan liet door de dokter naar zijn been kijken.
(iii) Jan liet *(Peter) naar zijn kantoor komen.
    Jan made Peter to his office come
follows naturally from considerations of argument structure: since the implicit construction involves suppression of the external argument, it cannot arise in the case of an unaccusative verb.

(15) a Ce médicament fait dormir.  
this medicine makes sleep  
b *Ça fait arriver en retard.  
this makes arrive late

(16) a Der Vorsitzende läßt arbeiten/tanzen.  
the chairman makes work/dance  
b *Hans läßt fallen/brechen.  
Hans makes fall/break

To summarize, structural case assignment is cross-linguistically the most common strategy for the realization of the subject of an embedded intransitive verb (see Table 2). This follows from our proposal, as does the possibility in the case of an unergative verb that the causee be left unrealized, as in French and Dutch, or be realized as a dative, as in the dialects discussed by Authier and Reed (1991), an option not available for unaccusative verbs for independent reasons (see the discussion below (13) and (14)). English differs from the other languages in not allowing the implicit construction at all, a fact which is not surprising as it does not allow for it in the case of a transitive verb either.

Table 2: Causative verbs with an intransitive complement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>accusative</th>
<th>dative</th>
<th>implicit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>unergative</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>– (dialects: +)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unaccusative</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German/Dutch</td>
<td>unergative</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unaccusative</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>unergative</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unaccusative</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Related questions

One problem which arises for our proposal is the apparent optionality of case marking strategies. Frequently, the choice between the constructions in (8) depends on the lexical properties of the matrix verb rather than on the valency of the embedded verb. The contrast between faire and laisser in French offers a ready example. While the dative construction is the only one available for a
transitive complement of *faire, laisser* can exceptionally case-mark the causee as in (17), from Kayne (1975:221), or use the dative.

(17) a Paul laissera son amie\textsubscript{acc.} manger les gâteaux.
    b Paul la laissera manger les gâteaux.
    Paul her\textsubscript{acc.} makes his friend eat the cakes

Significantly, the accusative seems to be preferred in spoken French, and where the dative arises it expresses a slightly different meaning (De Kok 1985; Authier and Reed 1991 report that the same holds for *faire* in those dialects that allow both the dative and the accusative construction with this verb). We suggest that this grammaticalization of case-marking options for specific and differentiated meanings be attributed to the Uniqueness Principle in (18). This would imply that where there is optionality of formal realization, one form will be chosen to correspond to one meaning and another form to another meaning.

(18) Uniqueness Principle: choose one form to correspond to one meaning.

This brings up the related problem of distinguishing between the causative and permissive senses of lexically ambiguous verbs, for instance Dutch *laten*. However, this is more or less disambiguated in the implicit construction: in (19), the primeless examples are ambiguous between a causative and a permissive reading, whereas the prime examples seem to favor a causative reading.

(19) a Hij liet de studenten het Maagdenhuis bezetten.
    a' Hij liet het Maagdenhuis bezetten.
    ‘He let (the students) occupy the Maagdenhuis.’
    b Hij liet de politie het Maagdenhuis ontzetten.
    b' Hij liet het Maagdenhuis ontzetten.
    ‘He let (the police) clear the Maagdenhuis.’

Even clearer examples are found in Japanese where the subject of an embedded unergative verb may be assigned either dative or accusative case, as shown in (20a) and (20b). However, this difference correlates with a semantic difference: the accusative is purely causative while the dative is permissive. (Comrie notes that these two readings are frequently found in the same morpheme in languages which have a morphological causative, like Japanese.)

(20) a Zyon ga Biru o aruk-ase-ta
    John top Bill acc walk-caus-past
    ‘John made Bill walk.’
    b Zyon ga Biru ni aruk-ase-ta
    John top Bill dat walk-caus-past
    ‘John had/let Bill walk.’
Let us briefly look at the Japanese paradigms as they provide an indication of the cross-linguistic coverage inherent to our proposal. The unergative verb *walk* in (20) can be constructed with either the accusative or the dative, with the above mentioned semantic distinction. As expected, however, the unaccusative verb *die* in (21) may only occur with the accusative, and the reading is then ambiguous between causation and permission; in (21), the context forces the less probable permissive interpretation.

(21) Omoiyari no aru isya wa konsuizyootai ni ari tasakaru mikomi no nai byoonin o/*ni sin-ase-ta (Shibatani 1976:255)
'The sympathetic doctor let the patient, who was in a coma and had no hope of survival, die.'

It is interesting to note that ECM is never possible if the verb is transitive, which shows that Japanese never allows the addition of a functional head, as in (2), in order to make ECM possible. Perhaps this can be made to follow from Li's (1990) proposal that verb incorporation cannot take place via an intermediate functional head, but we leave this for future research. The main conclusion for the moment is that the difference with respect to case-assignment between the intransitive stem in (20) and the transitive stem in (22) follows from our present proposal, assuming that Japanese does not allow the structure in (2).

(22) Taroo ga Ziroo ni/*o hon o kaw-ase-ta. (Shibatani 1976:244)
Taro top Jiro dat/acc book acc buy-caus-past
'Taro made Jiro buy a book.'

Of course there are many language-specific properties that have not been discussed, but we hope to have given an indication of a promising cross-linguistic analysis of the case-marking of the embedded causee. Further, we hope to extend our analysis to other verbs in the same syntactic class such as the verbs of perception. It seems that the same strategies for the case-marking of the embedded subject are used here as in the causative constructions. Thus English has only one option, namely ECM, and the impersonal constructions are ruled out. In German, Dutch and French, perception verbs seem to behave like *laisser* in that the accusative is allowed parallel with the implicit/dative construction.

6. Conclusions

In this article, we have discussed data from some well-studied European languages, but the analysis proposed here should have broad cross-linguistic validity. We began by proposing the minimal required functional structure for a causative construction (1) and then introduce several modifications which languages may make in the structure to fit their needs and the demands of the
embedded verb and other factors like semantics. A brief investigation shows that the proposal also holds for a non-Indoeuropean language like Japanese.

As concerns the intransitive complements, there is no theoretical problem with structural case assignment to the embedded subject. This is reflected in the overwhelming uniformity of accusative case marking as the only option for the subject of an intransitive verb. Still, unergative verbs allow the impersonal constructions in some languages, while this option is never available for unaccusative verbs. This follows from our claim that the impersonal constructions involve suppression of the external argument of the embedded verb.

For transitive embedded verbs, the situation is more complex. The causee can be expressed in several ways, namely in an implicit/oblique, dative or accusative construction. Our proposal, based on derivational economy, accounts for Comrie’s generalization of the typological frequency of these different constructions.

References