A Typology of Causatives, Pragmatically Speaking

Nancy Bishop

The purpose of this paper is to give a brief overview of the typology of causative constructions and to suggest that in addition to the syntactic and semantic factors governing causative constructions, explicit pragmatic explanations are needed to adequately account for their behavior. Prior to looking at some of the pragmatic considerations involved in language usage of causative constructions, a brief summary of linguistic typologies, specifically of causative constructions, is necessary. Linguistic typologies are the classification of languages into different types on the basis of their variation from one another. More than just a simple taxonomy of languages, typologies serve to explain the nature of languages as well as provide proof of language universals.

Not all typologies are of great interest or significance, but those that interact with implicational universals usually are. For example, Greenberg (1966) found a number of implicational universals stemming from the word order typology. He found correlates in the order of the genitive constituent as well as adjectives following the noun it modifies, and the existence of prepositions within the basic word order of VO languages (1966: 62,67).

The causative typology to be described in more detail later is based upon prototypes, suggested by Givón (1984). He proposes that languages fall along a continuum, forming non-discrete boundaries between actual types. The prototypes can be determined by a bell curve where the most typical qualities and the most frequent occurrence of those qualities occur. As a result, the prototypes are sometimes more ideal than real, but serve as a basic model of a given type.

Causality presupposes two conditions: the dependency of the effect event on the causing event and the required sharing of certain referential points, such as time, space, agency, etc. The scope of causality in this paper will not include interclausal constructions, instrumental causatives or permissive cause per se.

Comrie (1981) and Shibatani (1975) have extensively described the typology of causative constructions. To a lesser extent Syed (1984) has also described the causative typology in terms of affectivity. My own work has simply been to combine all three of these descriptions and to test their validity on a wide sample of languages taken from secondary sources, as well as to have introduced pragmatic consideration.

Languages typically use one or more of three causative prototypes: morphological, analytical and lexical causatives. Examples of each type are shown below:

1) MORPHOLOGICAL  Kewa, Papua New Guinea
   nipú - mī onáā ma -piraa -
   3 sg - AG people CAUSE -sit-3 sg
   PAST (alo)
   ‘He made the people sit down.’
   (Franklin 1971: 73)

2) ANALYTICAL  Thai
   sāakhā tham daeng rōm ḫaāy
   Saka cause Daeng cry
   ‘Saka caused Daeng to cry.’
   (Vichit-Vadakan 1976: 468)

3) LEXICAL
   She shoved her sister off the cliff.

The causative typology interrelates with two other typologies, morphological and word order. The mor-
The word order typology is concerned with the normal order of the subject (S), verb (V), and object (O) constituents. It has been found that VO languages are usually more isolating, therefore, they use analytical causatives. OV languages generally are more agglutinating in nature, so morphological causatives are more prevalent. This is explained on the premise that causative constructions are underlingly made up of two predicates, which when they undergo transformation come into closer proximity bringing about agglutination in the case of OV languages.

In addition to interaction with other typologies, causative constructions are sensitive to a number of semantic contexts. Shibatani (1975) presents four pairs of semantic factors that determine the use of languages’ causatives in specific contexts. These pairs are referred to as: coercive vs. non-coercive, directive vs. manipulative, direct vs. indirect, ballistic vs. controlled.

Coercive causation has to do with the amount of physical force exerted by the causee on the causee. It implies resistance on the part of the causee, which usually requires the causee to be animate. Non-coercive is oftentimes permissive in nature.

4) COERCIVE: ‘I made the doctor come.’

5) NON-COERCIVE: ‘I had the doctor come.’
   (Shibatani 1975: 41)

Directive causation implies the submissive volition of the causee. Directives are frequently verbal instructions or demands, so that an animate causee is required that can volitionally and physically respond. Manipulative causation frequently involves inanimate causees which must be physically manipulated and cannot volitionally resist. If a language can use more than one strategy, it will generally use the lexical form to express manipulation while the morphological form will be used for directive causation.

6) DIRECTIVE: Japanese
   Boku wa kodomo ni tat - ase - ta
   1sg NOM child DAT stand up-CAUSE-TNS
   ‘I had the child stand up.’

7) MANIPULATIVE:
   Boku ga boo o tate - ta
   1sg NOM stick ACC stand up - TNS
   ‘I stood the stick up.’
   (Shibatani 1975 : 55)

Sentence (7) becomes ungrammatical if ‘child’ is substituted for ‘stick’.

Direct causation implies a straightforward means of bringing about the effect event, while indirect causation makes use of a secondary or intermediary means. Both direct and indirect causation can be accomplished by physical or verbal acts. Direct causation is frequently expressed by lexical causatives; there is some evidence that the lexical form represents the perception of the speaker of the caused event. That is, lexical causatives represent only one event in the speaker’s mind, rather than two. Indirect causation entails a secondary means of achieving the effect event, usually a human causee who retains a degree of control. Analytical causatives are generally used to express indirect causation.

8) DIRECT: Blackfoot, U.S. & Canada
   nitsjikstakijipiaawa nitana mamiiksi
   l-count-intro-cause-ANT my daughter-ANT fish-pl
   ‘I made my daughter count the fish.’
9) INDIRECT:
    nitsjkstakjatssaawa nitaŋna mamikjksi
    1-count-intro-cause-ANT my daughter-ANT fish-pl
    'I had my daughter count the fish.' (by some intermediary means)
    (Frantz 1971: 66)

    Ballistic and controlled causation might better be
    understood as instigating and accompanying causation.
The implication is that in ballistic causation the causer
instigates a cause event which will bring about the
effect event, but the causer is not involved beyond
the initial control of the causee. In controlled causation,
there is accompaniment or continuous control
exerted by the causer from the moment of inception
until the final effect event is accomplished.

10) BALLISTIC:
The explosion made the building shake.
    (McCawley 1976: 119)

11) CONTROLLED
    John dressed the child in five minutes.
    (McCawley 1976: 117)

    The correspondence of the three types of causative
    constructions with the four pairs of semantic factors
    can be summarized by saying that lexical causatives
generally convey the meaning of manipulation, direct-
ness, coercion and at least in English, 'ballisticness'.
Analytical and morphological causatives generally express
the meanings of directive, indirect, non-coercive and
permissive causation. There is overlap of these seman-
tic features in almost every example, e.g., if there
is direct causation, there is likely to be manipulation
and coercion as well.

    Lastly, the impact of affectivity on the choice
    of causative constructions should be given a cursory
    examination. Affective causative verbs are ones that
    have a benefactive effect on the causee, such as recei-
    ving or benefiting from the action of the verb. The
    following examples demonstrate affective/non-cau-
sative, affective/causative and non-affective/non-cau-
sative constructions:

12) AFFECTIVE/NON-CAUSATIVE Kashmiri
    me h'ochh ariṭii bī tas niš
    1sg learn Arabic 3sg near
    'I learnt Arabic from him.'

13) AFFECTIVE/CAUSATIVE
    tem hechinōvus bi ani
    3sg learn-CAUS 1sg Arabic
    'He taught me Arabic.'

14) NON-AFFECTIVE/NON-CAUSATIVE
    me tsot kul tas niš
    1sg cut tree 3sg near
    'I cut the tree near him.'
    (Syeed 1985: 57, 8)

    So far the briefest sketches has been given
to describe the causative typology and factors which
govern its usage. In the remaining time, we will look
at pragmatic conditions which may also regulate a spea-
er's choice of causative constructions. Pragmatics
will be defined in accordance with the International
Pragmatics Association's Working Document 1 which
postulates that it is a perspective on language, rather than
a separate discipline or theory that examines the ob-
jects, levels, stages, degrees and functions of adapta-
tion that are made by speakers (Verschueren: 1987).

    First, the intent of the speaker of a causative
construction would seem to be of tremendous signifi-
cance in determining the strategy used. What the speaker
is trying to accomplish through his statement of caus-
ality affects the way in which he will express it. Specif-
ically, it seems that causative statements are fre-
quently used for one of two speech events. One
event or purpose is the speaker's desire to boast or
take the credit for an action; in that situation, the
speaker is the causer and via the expressible means
available to him in a specific language, he emphasizes
his own role in causing an event (or state). An
English example could be:

15) I defeated the incumbent candidate by a landslide
vote!

    English relies on both the fronting of the causer
and the intonation pattern to place emphasis on the
speaker. Note that a lexical causative construction
is used to express an event which was non-coer-
cive, more directive than manipulative, and indirect in nature.

The second common event or purpose of causative constructions is evaluation, specifically shifting the blame for something onto someone else. Franklin (1986: personal communication) comments that the morphological causative construction is only used in Kewa when the speaker intends to emphasize the causer's responsibility for bringing about something. Using English again as an example:

16) He made me flunk the test!

The speaker's intent in similar constructions to (16) is to express, however metaphorically, the coercion, manipulation, and directness of the causer's actions upon the causee. Note that the causee is animate, retaining control and volition. A lexical causative could be substituted in this construction, but only if the causer has the authority to carry out the action, such as 'He flunked me on the test'. The implication, however, of the analytical causative (16) is that the causer's action is unjust and demands restitution. The blame or responsibility is clearly placed on the causer. The parallel lexical causative can have two interpretations, one of blame and injustice or another of activity, implying that the causer's action was probably warranted, although not desired.

The importance of these observations is that the typology of causatives would not explain the occurrences of lexical and analytical causatives in these sentences. The reason appears to be that the choice of causative constructions in these two situations is pragmatically determined, rather than solely syntactically and semantically determined.

A second pragmatic factor to consider is the social setting in which the causative statement is being made. Within my own Western culture, unless the intention of the speaker is to defame someone, he will use an indirect means to express causation when he is in a public social setting. Figurative speech such as the use of innuendos, euphemisms, passive constructions, and unspecified causers is prevalent:

17) They strongly encouraged me to find another job.

18) I was fired from my job last week.

19) Someone revealed my 'mid-morning cocktails' to my boss.

In contrast to the public setting, the speaker will probably use more overt expressions of causality in a private setting, such as in his home or among his closest companions. Contrast the previous examples with:

20) Bob (my boss) sacked me yesterday.

21) Bob fired me last week.

22) That 'goodie-two-shoes' Sally squealed to my boss that I drink on the job.

The social setting, whether public or private, plays a role in determining how a speaker will express causation, especially if for the purpose of shifting responsibilities. How much of this difference is due to a public vs. private setting as compared to shared referential information is difficult to ascertain. Either motivation could prompt the same type of results in English.

A third pragmatic consideration is the social relationship of the speaker to the hearer. Constructions that parallel those used in different social settings are used in formal and informal social relationships. The more indirect expressions of causality are normally used in English if speaking to someone of a higher rank or of a greater social distance. In social relationships that are more intimate, the direct means of causal expression are frequently used; likewise, if the social rank of the hearer is equivalent to or lower than the speaker's, the normative expression is similar to those found in (20) - (22).

The final factor to be considered in this paper is the cultural or referential framework of the speaker. The existence of cause and effect is a universal quality of man, but its perception, scope, and conditions are culturally based. What can cause what is defined by a culture's world view. The animacy of something, which relates to its ability to be a causer and a causee, is specific to the culture of the speaker. Franklin (1986) notes that animacy is attributed to ambient entities or forces by the Kewa. To some degree, English allows elements, such as the wind or rain, to function as causer, but it seems it is more figurative than literal in meaning.

Another culturally defined quality is what is considered coercion or manipulation. In English, we imply coercion in statements like (17). Coercion, as well as manipulation, have extended their meanings in Eng-