

THREE TYPES OF CAUSATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN HAKHA LAI ¹

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1. INTRODUCTION

Hakha Lai (Chin) belongs to the Kuki-Chin branch of the Tibeto-Burman family. It is spoken in Hakha and Thantlang towns, and their vicinity (Chin State). Lai has predominantly SOV order.

There are three kinds of causative constructions in this language, which I call *s-* causatives, *-ʔ* causatives, and *-ter* causatives.

S- causatives are characterized by devoicing or aspiration of the stem-initial consonant, as shown in (1)²:

(1)	<i>Simplex</i> ³			<i>s- Causative</i>		
	<i>Form I</i>	<i>Form II</i>	<i>Gloss</i>	<i>Form I</i>	<i>Form II</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
a.	káaŋ	kaŋʔ	‘burn’ (int)	kháaŋ	khaŋʔ	‘burn’ (tr)
b.	mit	miʔ	‘go out’(light)	hmit	hmiʔ	‘extinguish’
c.	láu	lawʔ	‘disappear’	hláu	hlawʔ	‘erase’
d.	ri	riʔ	‘roll’ (int)	hri	hriʔ	‘roll’ (tr)
e.	rook	roʔ	‘break down’	hrook	hroʔ	‘destroy’
f.	tsat	tsaʔ	‘be severed’	tshat	tshaʔ	‘sever’ (tr)
g.	trùm	trúm	‘descend’	thrùm	thrumʔ	‘put down’ (tr)

The second type of causative construction involves a stem-final glottal stop, i.e. *-ʔ* causatives. Examples are given in (2):

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² For a brief summary of the Form I / Form II distinction in Lai, see section 2 below. For a full discussion of phonological alternations between Form I and Form II in Lai, see Melnik (1998); for the syntactic distribution of Form I and Form II, see Kathol and VanBik (2002); and for Tone in Lai, see Hyman and VanBik (2002a,b).

³ Following Matisoff (1976), I use the terms 'simplex' and 'causative' to differentiate the non-causative/causative pairs.

(2) *Simplex**-ʔ Causative*

	<i>Form I</i>	<i>Form II</i>	<i>Gloss</i>		<i>Gloss</i>
a.	dām	dám	'be healthy'	damʔ	'heal' (tr)
b.	raŋ	rán	'be fast'	ranʔ	'rush' (tr)
c.	thlùm	thlúm	'sweet'	thlumʔ	'sweeten'
d.	niam	níam	'short'	niamʔ	'shorten'
e.	sàaŋ	sáaŋ	'high'	sanʔ	'make higher'
f.	saaw	sáaw	'long'	sawʔ	'make longer'
g.	tooy	tóoy	'short'	toyʔ	'shorten'

The third type, *-ter* causative, is formed by suffixing the bound morpheme *-ter* to the verbs, as shown in (3):

(3) *Simplex**-ter Causative*

	<i>Form I</i>	<i>Form II</i>	<i>Gloss</i>		<i>Gloss</i>
a.	káaŋ	kaŋʔ	'burn' (int)	kaŋʔ-tèr	'cause to burn'
b.	miŋ	miʔ	'go out' (light)	miʔ-tèr	'cause to extinguish'
c.	lów	lowʔ	'disappear'	lowʔ-tèr	'cause to disappear'
d.	ríl	rilʔ	'roll' (int)	rilʔ-tèr	'cause to roll'
e.	rook	roʔ	'break down'	roʔ-tèr	'cause to break down'
f.	tsat	tsaʔ	'be severed'	tsaʔ-tèr	'cause to split'
g.	tláa t	laak	'fall'	tlak-tèr	'cause to fall'

Prima facie, the three causative constructions of Lai in (1-3) look similar, in that they all are transitive, involve causative meaning, and appear to be systematically related to non-causative verbs as illustrated in (4-6):

(4) a. *SIMPLEX*

Boo-lún ʔa-ríl.
 football 3SG.S-roll.I (int)
 'The football rolled.'

b. *s- CAUSATIVE*

Boo-lún ka-hrílʔ.
 football 1SG.S-roll.II (tr)
 'I rolled the football.'

(5) a. *SIMPLEX*

Na-tùŋ ʔa-sàaŋ.
 2SG.POS-height 3SG.S-high.I
 'You are tall.' [Lit. 'Your height is high.']

b. *-ʔ CAUSATIVE*

Na-tùŋ ka'n-sanʔ làay.
 2SG.POS-height 1SG.S-2SG.O-heighten.INV FUT
 'I will make you taller.' [Lit. 'I will heighten your height.']

(6) a. SIMPLEX

Boo-lún ?a-ríl.
 football 3SG.S-roll.I (int)
 'The football rolled.'

b. -TER CAUSATIVE

Boo-lún ka-ríl?-ter.
 football 1SG.S-roll.II-CAUS
 'I caused the football to roll.'

However, we will see that *s*-causative and *-?*causative would best be labeled as morphologically regular but unpredictable lexical causatives, while *-ter* causative constitutes a completely productive morphological causative.

In order to describe the causative constructions in Lai adequately, it is essential to have a brief summary of Form I / II verbal morphology, because this morphology plays an important role in every aspect of Lai syntax, including causative constructions.

2. VERBAL FORM ALTERNATION IN LAI

2.1. Form I and Form II Alternation

The examples in (1) above illustrate a morphological alternation which has been called Form I vs. Form II (Patent 1997). This alternation is arguably not linked in any straightforward way to a single parameter of variation such as tense, aspect, or transitivity. Instead the alternation appears to be conditioned by a number of lexical and constructional distinctions which may interact with each other.

In affirmative declarative root clauses, the basic pattern is that intransitive verbs exhibit Form I morphology as shown in (7A) whereas transitive verbs exhibit Form II morphology as illustrated in (7B)⁴:

(7A) INTRANSITIVE

- a. Ni Hu ?a-tlii.
 Ni Hu 3SG.S-run.I
 'Ni Hu ran.'
- b. Ka-pàa ?a-?it.
 1SG.POS-father 3SG.S-sleep.I
 'My father slept.'

⁴ Under certain conditions, a notionally transitive verb can occur with Form I even in affirmative root clauses. However, as Bickel (2000:9) notes, there are constructions that are notionally transitive but nevertheless count as intransitive from the perspective of the grammar.

(7B) TRANSITIVE

- a. Ni Hu ni? vok ?a-tha?
 Ni Hu ERG pig 3SG.S-kill.II
 'Ni Hu killed the pig.'
- b. Ka-nùu ni? ròol ?a-tshúan.
 1SG.POS-mother ERG food 3SG.S-cook.II
 'My mother cooked a meal.'

There are some overriding factors in the syntax of Form I and Form II alternation. The presence of negative marker *láv*, imperative marker *tua?*, or yes/no question marker *máa* uniformly require Form I morphology regardless of the (in)transitivity of the verb, as shown in (8):

(8) a. NEGATIVE

Ni Hu ni? vok ?a-that láw.
 Ni Hu ERG pig 3SG.S-kill.I NEG
 'Ni Hu did not kill the pig.'

b. IMPERATIVE

ròol tshúan tua? !
 food cook.I IMP
 '(Please) cook a meal!'

c. Yes/No QUESTION

Ni Hu ni? vok ?a-that máa ?
 Ni Hu ERG pig 3SG.S-kill.I QST
 'Did Ni Hu kill the pig?'

In adverbial subordinate clauses, Form II morphology is required. This construction overrides any Form I requirements stemming from the status of the verbs as intransitive. Cf. (9):

(9) SUBORDINATE

- a. Ni Hu ni? vok ?a-tha? láw tik-?a?...
 Ni Hu ERG pig 3SG.S-kill.II NEG when
 'When Ni Hu did not kill the pig...'
- b. Ni Hu ?a-tliik láw tsàa-?a?...
 Ni Hu 3SG.S-run.II NEG because
 'Because Ni Hu did not run...'